SUMMER 1996

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PsiMail: mobile email for the Series 3a

PSION

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PSION VERSION NOW AVAILABLE

PSION USER

Introduction

Ever felt like you were in a time warp? When we produced our first organiser back in 1984, I used to take it out on the train into work and tap away on it. In those days of course, computers did not have anything like the power that they have today. But nonetheless it was a strange experience – it was almost like having the first television set on your street. People used to stand around me in amazement as I entered a line of text, saved it and was then able to retrieve it. 'Wow,' the men would say, stroking their enormously wide ties, 'wow'.

We have come full circle. I recently caught the train to work and took out my Series 3a. Nobody batted an eyelid. In fact, three other people, two men and a woman, were also hammering away on their Psions. I took out my mobile phone, connected it to the Psion and dialled the office to pick up my email. The two men sitting opposite me ceased their hammering and stared across.

'What are you doing?' one asked. 'Picking up my email from the office,' I replied. Next thing, both men were standing behind me peering at the screen. The woman too, on her way to the dining car I assume, had paused briefly and was peeping over one of the men's shoulders. A few seconds later, connection made, I downloaded the latest sales figures and the agenda for our next international conference. 'Wow,' they said, 'wow'. Apart from the huge advances in our technology, nothing much else had changed in 12 years... apart from the size of the men's ties!

PsiMail is the latest in a line of important developments to come from the Psion stable that are really changing the way handheld devices are seen round the world. It all started with PsiWin, which provides Psion users with full PC connectivity and the portability of most desktop applications. The ability to send and receive short text messages was yet another key step forward. Add to this the power to access Reuters real-time share data, and the emergence of electronic banking services on the Psion, and you have in your hand a remarkably versatile computer which can adapt to the way you work and live your life.

With all these advances you may wonder if there is much left that a Psion can't do. Well, I can assure you of one thing. Psion will continue to 'wow' consumers well into the next millennium.

David Potter

Chairman, Psion plc

PSION
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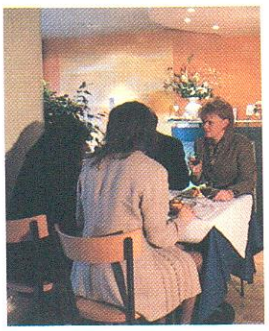


Get a 25% discount at restaurants such as London's Le Bistroteque

Gourmet guide

Series 3a users can now enjoy a free six-month subscription to Transmedia's restaurant card, which gives a 25% discount on food and drink at more than 6,000 restaurants in the UK.

At the end of the trial period, customers can either return the card with nothing to pay or pay the £35 annual subscription fee to extend the service for a further 12 months.

Transmedia produces paper directories containing information on participating restaurants, which it sends regularly to 500,000 card members worldwide.

However, 3a users can now receive the UK directory on disk, as Transmedia Pages. This combines Transmedia's directories with Mobile Software's powerful database search software for the 3a. Members receive directory updates every six weeks.

Mobile Software is working on a similar agreement for US and Australian distribution.

Transmedia Pages is available free of charge from the Transmedia Customer Services department.

Call the company on +44 171 930 0700 for details, and an application form.

Appliance for science: pupils at Sutton Valence School using their 3a's in the lab

A *class* of its own

Students and teachers at an English secondary school have given the concept of 'IT in the classroom' a new dimension. For over a year, around 100 pupils and staff at Sutton Valence School in Kent have used Series 3a's alongside the school's 80 networked PCs.

Sutton Valence, an independent school recognised as a centre for computing excellence, buys the 3a's at a discount and sells them to pupils, spreading payment over three terms. 'We considered loaning them out,' says Richard Rothwell, head of computing, 'but no-one ever wanted to give them back.'

Pupils use their 3a's for writing essays, storing book lists, and plotting data on the spot during science lessons. They also keep their homework diaries on it, and the school calendar is published in agenda format. Shareware in the classroom cabinet includes JB Data, Mapper 3a, periodic tables, a scientific calculator, and backgammon. Many teachers find the 3a useful for report writing and storing notes on pupils' essays.

Rothwell stresses that it's not just about making study easier, however. 'When our students go out to work, every single one of them will be information workers in one way or another. They will all need to be familiar with computer technology, and the sooner they are exposed to it, the better.' Rothwell aims to equip all sixth formers with a Series 3a within a couple of years.

'We looked at notebook PCs,' he adds, 'but the Psion won hands down in terms of battery life, portability, ease of use and smooth PC links.' When parents ask him for advice on buying a home PC for their children, Rothwell now tells them that a Psion may well be a better choice.

'A Psion gives children access 24 hours a day,' he says, 'while a PC will be used for only two or three hours after school. And the Series 3a links home and school together very effectively.'

In the first issue of *Psion User*, we reported that a Danish class of 14-year-olds was using Series 3a's in similar circumstances, and that the Danish Ministry of Education had allowed the class to use their Psions in an outside examination.

Does Rothwell think that the 3a may become accepted in exam halls across Britain one day? 'When I was at school they thought children would never be allowed to use a calculator in the exam room and would have to use the slide rule forever. Does that answer your question?'

Spread the good news

Great news for all itinerant preachers: now you can travel light with just a Psion for company. Instead of carrying the Lord's Book in paper format, Series 3/3a owners can now store all 66 books of the King James Bible on a single solid state disk (SSD).

Psion and National Technology Services (or NTS) have joined forces to make the world's best-selling book available in portable, electronic format. You can now access any book of the King James Bible with the touch of a button. Once the program is installed on the 3/3a, you can search, browse and earmark passages with a memo feature.

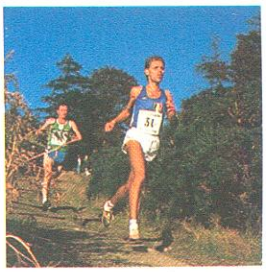
'Now those who want to engage in bible study can do so easily and electronically while taking advantage of the power of the Series 3a palmtop,' says Robert Siegel, a president at NTS.

The King James Bible program requires a Series 3 or 3a and a solid state disk with at least 200KB free storage for the smallest book, or 2MB for all the books. Alternatively, you can order the Bible preloaded on a 2MB solid state disk.

For more details, call NTS (in the US) on +1 609 663 0354.

Contact details

Readers can contact *Psion User* magazine at Redwood Publishing, 12-26 Lexington St, London W1R 4HQ. Fax: +44 171 312 2601. Or e-mail us at 100566.3042@compuserve.com



The finishing order was captured by a Workabout

Czech off

For the last 60 years, more than 5,000 Czechs have gathered in a village just outside Prague to participate in the most popular cross-country race in the Republic, the Velka Kunraticka.

But last year was the first time that the organisers dispensed with the traditional stopwatch and used a Psion to time the race. 'The sheer volume of people taking part meant that runners usually had to wait for up to two hours between finishing and getting the results,' says Milan Razga of Psion's Czech distributor, Point X.

Point X supplied the organisers with a Psion Workabout running specially developed software to time the race. The company also provided a Psion HC with laser scanner for capturing the exact finishing order of the runners, who wore a barcode on their starting numbers. The data was downloaded to a PC and processed immediately, allowing the results to be printed out just 15 minutes after the race ended.

'The organisers were delighted with the system, which we set up as a free trial,' comments Razga. 'They are now thinking of extending it to the cross-country skiing races.'

Mission to Bosnia

You may think you would be lost if you broke your Psion and could not access all the valuable information inside.

But spare a thought or two for Tom Colborne-Malpas, political advisor to the International Conference on the former Yugoslavia.

When his Psion was damaged, it contained lengthy notes from negotiations which were crucial to peace efforts in the war-torn area.

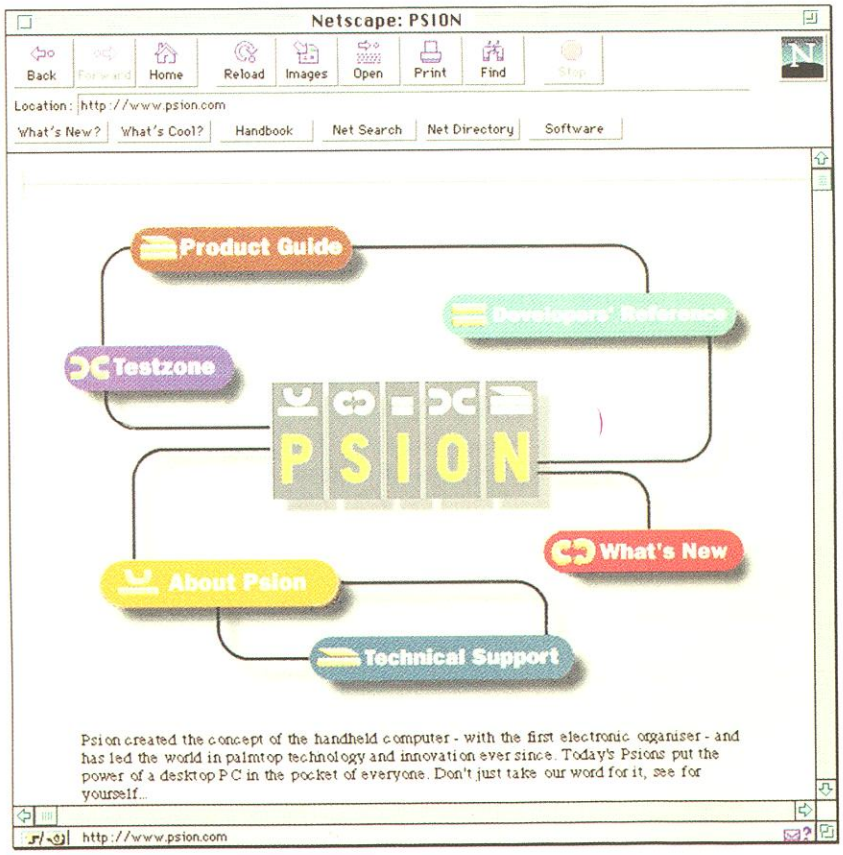
The Series 3a contained notes from peace talks

'We were travelling in a UN helicopter across Bosnia Herzegovina,' he explains, 'packed like sardines and running the gauntlet of some of the nastier areas.

'I took the precaution of sitting on my briefcase since a flakjacket and helmet offer only partial protection, but the combination of my weight and the bumpy flight was too much for the 3a and the screen cracked.'

Although the 3a still worked, the data stored inside was unreadable.

The story has a happy ending though. Psion flew out a replacement machine to the area, and the information was successfully retrieved.



Psurf the Psion Web site

For up-to-date news on the latest products from Psion, look no further than the official Psion plc Web site. Here you can access full details on the complete Psion product range and latest software titles, as well as technical support information, an online query service and corporate news. Reference material for software development is included for budding programmers. And for those with basic queries concerning the Series 3a, there's a list of Psion FAQs (frequently asked questions). Last but not least, there are links to a wide range of other Psion sites on the World Wide Web. To view the site, just point your browser at *http://www.psion.com*

Pru purchase

The UK's biggest life insurance company, Prudential, has supplied 6,500 of its salespeople with a Series 3a. Prudential's new 3a program, Prudence, allows employees on the move to provide clients with detailed projections on how policies could fare.

Up until now, insurance companies have been providing their salespeople with laptop computers, but this would have cost Prudential around £26 million. Instead, the Psion-based application cost just £3.5 million.

Look out for more details of this major application in the next issue of *Psion User*.

Miles better: Robert Ayling travels with a 3a

High-flying Psion

Robert Ayling, CEO of British Airways, bought a Series 3a six months ago and hasn't looked back since.

'My secretary downloads the diary, telephone numbers and To Do list from her PC every day,' says Ayling, 'so that wherever I am in the world, I am always up to date. I like the machine because it's easy to carry around but still gives me all the information I need at my fingertips.'

Although he is too busy to play the games, Ayling does use his Psion for more than he expected. 'The calculator, world function and alarm clock are all very useful in my business life,' he says.

Eastern promise

Psion's presence in the Middle East is set to grow this summer after the launch of new language cabilities for the 3a. From June onwards, users will be able to buy software which enables them to use the word processor in Arabic; later releases will include the database and spreadsheet. Arabic key guides can be placed over the English keyboard, and characters are displayed in Arabic on screen.

'Psion users in the Middle East tend to be English speakers, but they still need to compose letters and other documents in Arabic,' says Sahar Badra-Hassan of MEC, which appoints Psion's distributors in the region. 'This software offers our customers the choice of using the 3a in either language.'

For further details, contact MEC's Commercial Division on +44 171 924 3383.

Singapore office

A new Psion office has opened in Singapore. Psion already has a distributor in the country, and has seen a surge in sales of the Series 3a; in 1995 the market more than doubled.

'We chose Singapore for its location, its communications, the profile of its industry and its general accessibility,' says Geoff Kell of Psion.

Wild trip: the 3a's survived harsh conditions during the expedition to Socotra

Collecting for nature

The Socotra Archipelago, which lies off the Horn of Africa, has one of the highest levels of undisturbed native plant life in the world, with over 30% of the species being unique to the island. It also has high, dust-laden winds, temperatures in excess of 40°C, no electricity and no real roads.

So when a scientific team from the marine environment consultants MacAlister Elliott and Partners and Edinburgh's Royal Botanical Garden visited the islands to help prepare a plan for preserving the flora and fauna, they knew that using laptops for data analysis would be impossible. 'Luckily Psion loaned us three Series 3a's with flash disks for back-up,' says Tim Huntington, the expedition leader. 'We used them for gathering data, compiling lists of species and monitoring our expenses.' After surviving the salty sea air during an eight-day boat voyage around the islands, being carted up and down mountains, and suffering unpaved roads in a pick-up, the 3a's made it safely to the mainland where the data was downloaded and the databases merged.

Get the message across

Many more UK mobile phone users will soon be using their Series 3a for mobile data messaging, following the launch of new SMS (Short Message Service) packages this summer.

The products will enable Cellnet GSM and Orange subscribers in the UK to connect their 3a's to their mobile phone, and then to create, send, receive and store messages of up to 160 characters on the Psion.

Vodafone GSM users have enjoyed this facility since the launch of Telenote Link last December. Like the new packages, Telenote Link comprises a cable for connecting your Series 3a to your phone, software for sending and receiving messages, a user guide, and PC software for sending messages direct from a PC to the phone/Series 3a.

The Vodafone and Cellnet GSM packages are compatible with the following phones: Nokia 2110, and Philips 747; Orange users will need a Nokia Orange phone.

Says Graham O'Keeffe, Psion's head of product marketing: 'These packages provide an easy and inexpensive way for the travelling businessperson to stay in touch with the office. And the fact that they work in other European countries is an added bonus.'

For more details of the packages, contact your local Psion distributor.

The PsiPhone deskstand allows handsfree dialling

Phone double from Palmtop

Mobile phone users throughout Europe can benefit from a product launched by Palmtop in the Netherlands, which developed the Vodafone Telenote Link SMS package (see also other story on this page).

The new product, Messenger, allows the use of SMS (Short Message Service) over any GSM network with a Series 3a and a Nokia 2110 compatible phone. And for corporate applications, a Workabout version is also available. Additional features of this version make it suitable for communication between a central point and a group of mobile users. Messenger is currently available in German and English.

For those without a mobile phone, Palmtop has introduced PsiPhone, a deskstand that allows handsfree dialling from the Series 3a database.

Designed for use at home or in the office, PsiPhone connects to most DTMF telephones (cable and connector included). When you have set it up, you simply press the Dial key on your 3a – PsiPhone does the rest.

For more information on either of these products, contact Palmtop in the Netherlands on +31 20 446 9469.

'The Series 3a is a logical choice, Captain'

Bold exhibitions

London's Science Museum displayed the Series 3a in a recent exhibition celebrating 30 years of *Star Trek*. The exhibition, which featured original sets, props and costumes, included a section about the science behind the TV series. The 3a was one example of present-day technology which is similar to that used in the *Star Trek* series.

The exhibition has now moved to the Museum of Science and Industry in Manchester.

Psion products were also on show at the Louisiana Museum of Modern Art in Copenhagen, the Cultural City of 1996. The exhibition, 'Design and Identity', featured Series 3a's and Workabouts in a section on British excellence.

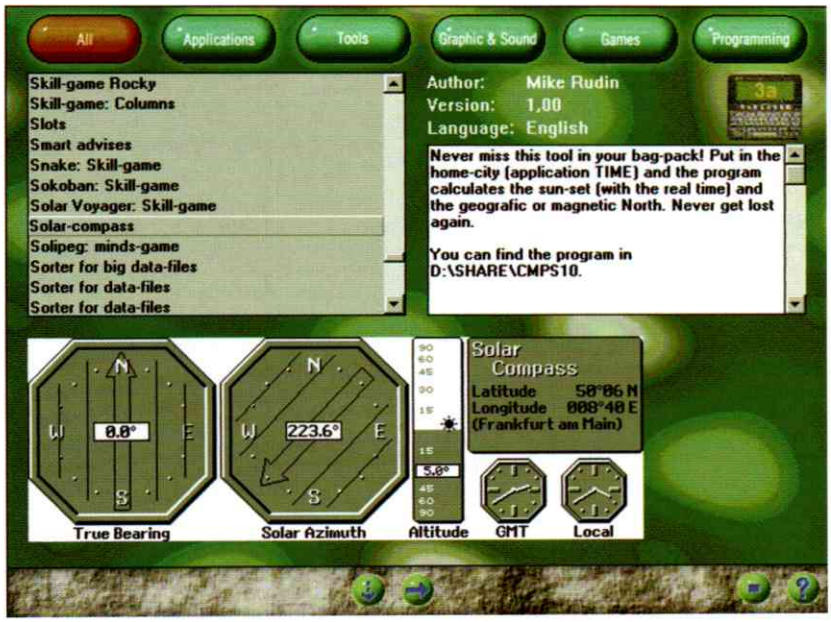
Wood work

Psion has released a limited edition of its 2MB Series 3a to celebrate the tenth anniversary of the original Organiser II.

More than 1,000,000 Organisers have been sold since the Organiser II family was launched in 1986.

The specially designed machine has a smooth, wood-effect finish and comes in its own presentation box. It is available from selected retail outlets, so hurry to get yours before stocks run out.

Contact your local Psion distributor for details.



Shareware directory: the programs on this CD are listed with detailed descriptions

Disk of delights

A new CD-ROM packed full of Psion goodies for the Series 3a and the PC has been released by Yellow Computing.

The CD (available in English and German) contains more than 400 shareware programs, including Mapper 3a and more games than you could ever have time to play. There are also fully licensed copies of three best-selling Psion utilities: Winlink (for transferring files between your Series 3a and your PC); Agenda 3 (a PC-based diary program); and 3Base (for converting files from Psion Data into the formats used by other popular PC programs).

Other goodies on the CD include an amazing library of sound files with which you can customise your alarms.

For the German version, call Yellow Computing on +49 71 369 5110. The English version is distributed by Widget Software. Tel: +44 1438 815444.

Academia meets technology in Gosling's portrait

Principal's Psion

Justin Gosling, principal of Oxford's St Edmund Hall College, was so engrossed in familiarising himself with his Psion Series 3 that he was captured doing just that by official portrait painter, David Tindle. The above portrait was exhibited at last year's Royal Academy Summer Exhibition.

'I use the Agenda facility most of all,' says philosopher Gosling, 'but despite the capability of the Series 3, its 256KB memory is still no match for the human brain.'

Precious cargo

The Series 3a will appear in *Space Truckers*, a science-fiction adventure film set 200 years in the future.

The film follows maverick truck driver hero John Canyon, played by Dennis Hopper, as he finds himself careering through many twists and turns in the solar system to deliver a mysterious cargo to earth. But the 3a is used by the villain, Macanudo, played by Charles Dance.

Other recent credits in Psion's glittering cinematic and television history include roles in UK series *Absolutely Fabulous* and *Coronation Street*. Keep your eyes peeled for further appearances...

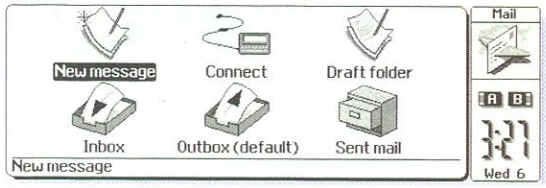
THE MUSEUM OF SCIENCE AND INDUSTRY IN MANCHESTER

Mobile mail

Do you miss your email when away from the office? Now you can keep in touch using your Series 3a. Psion has introduced PsiMail, which allows you to contact office-based email systems, wherever you are

Photography by Ian Jackson

When electronic mail was introduced into the office environment, it revolutionised working practices. Email first appeared on networks of terminals connected to large, mainframe computers – but even in those far-gone days of the 1970s, the ability to send instant messages to people working in other departments led to an assault on internal barriers in organisations.



In the 'office': the main PsiMail screen on the Series 3a

Email is much more than the electronic equivalent of a voice or paper message. It allows users to send messages when they want to whoever they want – without needing to know the exact location of the recipient. Likewise, the recipient can open email when it's convenient. And today's systems can cope with rich information sources, such as graphics and images, as well as text.

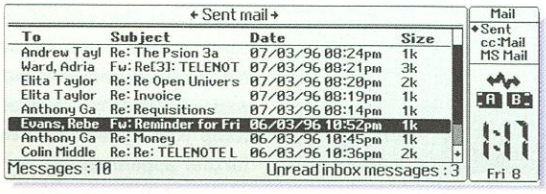
Creating and addressing an email from the public list

Since networks of personal computers have sprung up, office automation software – of which email is a key component – has changed out of all recognition. Developers have used the power of the Windows interface to create a profusion of office products designed to increase productivity – in particular, the so-called 'workgroup' products such as Lotus Notes are making life a a lot easier for people working on different aspects of the same project.

This has led to email being an indispensable part of the working day for many people – so much so that being able to pick up the latest messages while out of the office is crucial. Which is where Psion's latest software comes in: it's far more convenient to carry a Series 3a around than a notebook computer.

PsiMail on the 3a works with Lotus cc:Mail and MS Mail systems: that's a user base of more than 18 million people worldwide. Later this year, Psion will add Internet Mail to the 3a's capability, which will cater for the many people using the Internet and allow them to pick up their email.

Options galore: connection settings (above), and sent mail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Elita Taylor Re: Invoice 07/03/96 08:19pm 1k
Anthony Ga Re: Requisitions 07/03/96 08:14pm 1k
Evans, Rebe Fw: Reminder for Fri 06/03/96 10:52pm 1k
Anthony Ga Re: Money 06/03/96 10:45pm 1k
Colin Middle Re: Re: TELENOTE L 06/03/96 10:36pm 2k
Messages : 10
Unread inbox messages : 3
A B
Fri 8

PsiMail allows you to create, send and receive email messages (including attachments such as spreadsheets) using a modem connection to a telephone line (including GSM digital phones).

At the office end of the connection is the PsiMail Gateway (the same Gateway software is used no matter what host email system is in place), which runs on a dedicated PC and supports a single modem. Naturally, this PC must be on the same network as – and have access to – the host email 'post office'.

Installation is straightforward, and only a minimal amount of configuration is required to get the Gateway up and running. You can convert the public address book from the host system into a format compatible

with the PsiMail software. And you don't have to worry about getting this over to the Psion – the converted address book is transferred automatically when the PsiMail software is installed on the 3a, and the system can be configured to provide automatic updates to keep the host and 3a address books synchronised.

In use, PsiMail on the 3a is very user-friendly and intuitive. On starting up the package, you are presented with a simple screen displaying six icons; alternatively, you can access the same features via the 'diamond' key.

When you want to send a message, the public address book provided by the system administrator appears on screen. (You can also create a personal address book for storage on the 3a.) Once the message is completed, it can either be placed in an Outbox for transmission when you are next connected, or saved to the 'Draft Folder' if further work is required before it is sent. Once sent, a message is transferred from the Outbox to a 'Sent Mail' folder.

When you connect to the host network – via a modem and fixed-line phone or via your GSM digital mobile phone – you specify a session type (send only, receive only, send and receive, or special) and your location, and your Series 3a does the rest, dialling the number and entering your password automatically. You can restrict transmission in certain ways (for example, by receiving the 'header' only, or by not receiving attachments) to minimise connection times.

If you do want to read everything, the Gateway automatically converts all email attachments (such as documents and spreadsheets) between Psion native formats and the most popular PC software packages – including Word for Windows, WordPerfect, Lotus 123 and Excel.

The Inbox displays the message headers, the size of the main messages and the number and nature of any attachments. After seeing what's there, you can use the 'Special Receive' facility to download messages and/or attachments. This is a very efficient way of working off-line, especially if you intend to continue processing most of your email back in the office.

For those who wish to process all their email on the 3a – even in the office – the package includes PsiMail Direct. This utility allows you to link the 3a to your PC via the 3Link cable, and provides direct access to the host email system.

PsiMail provides the ideal way to stay in touch while on the move and is, without doubt, far more cost-effective and convenient than a full-blown laptop solution.

Requirements: Psion Gateway software needs a minimum 386 40MHz PC with 8MB RAM, 10MB free disk space and a modem. PsiMail Direct needs a 386 40MHz PC with 4MB RAM and 1MB free disk space. PsiMail on the 3a is available in English (shortly in Dutch, French and German); it requires a modem and runs on a 512KB or higher Series 3a. Contact your Psion distributor for further information.

PsiMail: Questions & Answers

Q: Can I use a desktop modem with PsiMail?

A: Yes. PsiMail can use a desktop modem (with an additional connector) to access the email gateway. True portability is offered by Psion's own 3Fax modem.

Q: Are SMS and email the same thing?

A: No. SMS stands for Short Message Service, a facility for sending messages to mobile phones or computers over digital GSM networks. The confusion arises because you can use the mobile phone as a modem (with additional hardware) to pick up email. However, this use of the phone as a modem has nothing to do with the phone's SMS capabilities.

Q: Will putting a Psion gateway on to a corporate network compromise network security?

A: No. The dial-up method is no different to other remote access packages such as Lotus cc:Mail Remote. Psion's gateway works with a 'client' on the Series 3a, whereas the cc:Mail remote client is running on a remote PC. In terms of security, the client software offers password protection – a password is needed for every log-on to the gateway. This is the same as other remote access clients.

Q. Will PsiMail support document conversions?

A. Yes. The Psion gateway has support for two-way conversions built in. These will only support word processing and spreadsheet documents, which are the primary business tools.

Q. Will the gateway support Microsoft Exchange?

A. PsiMail currently supports Exchange systems, provided they are running MS Mail post offices. Full support for Exchange server will be launched later this year.

PsiMail in practice

Twelve managers at British Telecom offices around the UK have been trialling the PsiMail package for around six months. The managers, whose jobs involve a fair amount of travelling, were already using Series 3a's to help manage their business affairs. And with PsiMail up and running, they are finding the machine even more invaluable. 'With email on board, the Series 3a ranks alongside some of the better laptops on the market in terms of power and capability,' says Mick Heduan, information systems manager at BT Global Communications Division. 'It also has the advantage of being more secure and more practical than a laptop when travelling overseas. You don't have to worry about batteries, and you aren't an obvious target for theft.'

The first phase of the trial involves using PsiMail as an additional source of email, dialling in from fixed-line phones. 'Recently I was at a meeting where I picked up an action point requiring immediate attention. At the end of the meeting, I was able to announce that I had already sent the relevant message on the spot using my PsiMail package. Everyone was very impressed.'

Heduan uses the package in combination with his BT Chargecard. 'My Chargecard account details are logged in my Series 3a,' he explains, 'so that calls are automatically charged to the account, wherever I call from, even overseas. This adds even more flexibility to the application.'

The final phase of the trial will involve using PsiMail with Nokia mobile phones on a GSM network. BT will be reviewing results of the trial to decide on the future use of PsiMail within the company.

Do you have a query or useful tip? Or do you have a Psion story to tell? If so, pick up your pen (or your Psion) and write to us now

What a godsend

As a Russian priest working in Germany, I have been an active Psion user for many years. It helps me perform tasks in my parish and to communicate with other members of the Church worldwide, using Latin fonts only, of course!

Through the German edition of *Psion User*, I learnt about the Russian version of the Series 3a. This is exactly what I have dreamt of for several years, and from your article it seems perfectly suited to my needs in every respect.

Could you provide me with any further information or tell me how I could get hold of the Russian Psion (possibly as an upgrade to my brand-new 2MB Series 3a) without necessarily going to Moscow?

Nikolai Artemoff
Russian Orthodox Church, Munich, Germany

To buy a Russian version of the Series 3a, contact Psion's London based Russian distributor, Roditi. Russian 3a's can be ordered from any location worldwide; just telephone +44 171 439 4390, or fax +44 171 434 0896.

Gamble pays off

The British Trust for Conservation Volunteers is the UK's leading practical conservation charity, supporting the activities of over 85,000 people in their efforts to improve the local environment.

The Series 3a and PsiWin have proved invaluable tools for many of us working for BTCV. As a charity, often operating on a minimal budget, we have to be sure that we can justify spending £300+ on what may be seen as a gadget. In the Yorkshire and North Midlands area, three of us took the plunge and parted with the cash, and have found that the resulting improvements in efficiency, such as minutes printed up and distributed within hours, and information gathered on site to be collated and communicated later, have more than repaid the investment.

David Ives
Wild West Yorkshire Project Officer, United Kingdom

Printing problem

I recently bought the Psion link for Mac. Is there any way I can print to my StyleWriter 1200 using this?

Quentin English
Paris, France

The Psion cannot print to the StyleWriter, ImageWriter or LaserWriter 300, because these Macintosh printers need QuickDraw – part of the Mac's operating system – to print.

The solution is to copy the files you want to print to the Mac, open them in a Mac application, and then print them from the Mac in the normal way.

Roman holiday

During a visit to Rome with my parents last year, we were presented with the menu in a very nice Italian restaurant. Despite the best efforts of the friendly but sadly monolingual waiters, my father's grounding in Italian and my knowledge of Latin, we were still unable to understand anything on the menu. Out came my trusty Psion Series 3, which safely navigated us through the various courses and helped us to order a wonderful, traditional Italian meal.

Gary Lowe
Kent, United Kingdom

Learn your labels

I have found a neat way to generate a label printing mail list on the Series 3a. The list is assembled in a Data file, by inserting the name and address in the Name category. Each line is separated by keying in Shift/Enter, and the Display menu is set to 'hide labels'. Select pico 10 font and portrait orientation. Set Print to 'separate page for each entry', and Entries to 'all'; choose 'no' for all other settings. Top, bottom and righthand margins are all set to zero, and the left-hand margin is set to suit the label used. The Series 3a will then print your mailing list on a roll of labels loaded on to your printer.

John Forse
Trentham, Stoke-on-Trent, United Kingdom

Tip for time travellers

Reading your article in the last issue of *Psion User*, 'Shooting stars... and famous views', I noticed that film director Michael Schultz was keen to get hold of a world clock function that shows six time zones simultaneously.

He need look no further than Steve Litchfield's 3-Lib public domain software library. There is a 'zipped' file within the Orphan File Collection, called 'clocks.zip', which shows up to eight clocks simultaneously.

Simon Rafferty
Meir Heath, Stoke-on-Trent United Kingdom

For details on how to contact Steve Litchfield, see the shareware article on page 18.

Readers can write to *Psion User* magazine at 12-26 Lexington Street, London, W1R 4HQ, United Kingdom. Fax: +44 171 312 2601. Or email us on 100566.3042@compuserve.com. We are unable to reply to readers' letters individually.

Please note that all telephone numbers in *Psion User* are international, eg +44 for the UK.

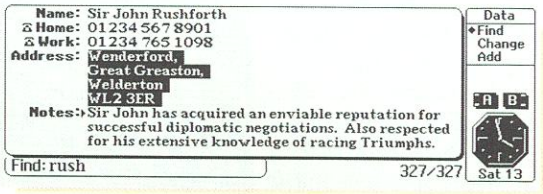
Make A move

Many Psion users don't realise how easy it is to transfer information between files, and even between applications. Mark Whitehorn explains how to get the most from your data

Illustration by Andy Martin

What makes the Psion invaluable is its ability to manipulate data. As delivered, it possesses the three universal manipulators – word processor, spreadsheet and database – and more applications can be added from the vast range of third-party programs available. But the value of your data is increased if you can move it around, both within and between applications.

Suppose that you are composing a letter on your Psion. After roughing it out, you read it over and decide that the first paragraph would pack more punch if it came at the end of the letter. To replace the opening paragraph, you want to import one from a letter that you wrote a couple of days ago. Finally you need to add the recipient's address to the top of the letter; this is stored somewhere in the database.



To move data between applications, highlight it, move to the target application, position the cursor and press Psion B

This example illustrates the three possible types of data movement. You can move data within a single document; between different files within a single application; and finally between different applications.

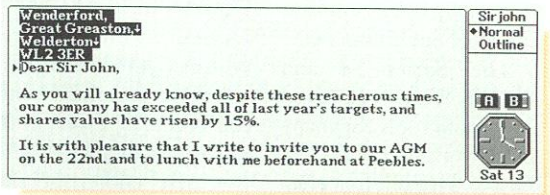
With its usual attention to detail, Psion has covered all these angles. Rather like Windows on a PC, the Psion allows you to cut, copy and paste using a clipboard analogy. However, unlike Windows, the Psion has multiple clipboards – one for each file, and not just for each application. Let's look at using these functions in the example described above.

Single document

The first job is to move that punchy paragraph from the beginning to the end of the letter. Highlight it using Shift and the cursor keys, and then press Delete. (Unlike Windows, data deleted in the Psion is automatically moved to the clipboard.) Next, move the cursor to the text's new location. Pop down the Edit menu, choose Insert text (*Psion I*) and the paragraph reappears in its new location.

If you want to copy the paragraph to another part of the document, highlight it, select Edit, Copy (*Psion C*) from the menu to copy the data to the clipboard, and then Insert it as before. Whether you're moving or copying, the selected text remains in the document's clipboard until you replace it with something else, so you can insert a selection multiple times. However, as soon as you put anything else into the clipboard, this overwrites whatever was already there.

Moving data within a document works much the same way in all applications; for example, worksheets in the spreadsheet application also have clipboards. Here also, the Edit menu offers Copy and Paste options, but while Copy works as before, Paste behaves slightly differently. To move a block of cells (or, indeed, a single cell), you highlight it, delete it, move the cursor to the new position and select Edit, Paste. It sounds the same, but the important difference is that any data in the new position will be overwritten by the incoming data; this is unlike moving text in a word processor, where existing text budges up to make room for the incoming text. For more pasting options in the spreadsheet, including the option not to overwrite existing data, try experimenting with the Paste special option (*Shift Psion I*).


Wenderford,
Great Greaston,
Welderton
WL2 3ER
Dear Sir John,
As you will already know, despite these treacherous times, our company has exceeded all of last year's targets, and shares values have risen by 15%.
It is with pleasure that I write to invite you to our AGM on the 22nd. and to lunch with me beforehand at Peebles.
Sir John
Normal
Outline
A B
Sat 13

To move text within a document highlight it, press Delete, move the cursor to the new location and press Psion I

The database gives you Copy and Insert text options, and the agenda has Copy and Insert entry. Both behave as expected, except that when using the agenda, you can only work with entire entries. You don't, therefore, have to highlight a whole entry; just taking the cursor on to any part of it will select the complete record.

Single application

As described above, this type of movement isn't just a case of transferring via a single clipboard since each file has its own. Instead, you need to use a function called Bring; this works in all built-in applications.

In the given example, you now want to import a paragraph from a previously created document. Press the System key, highlight the name of the relevant document and press Shift Enter. This will open the second document without closing the first. You can

30
31
1
2
Andy Martin

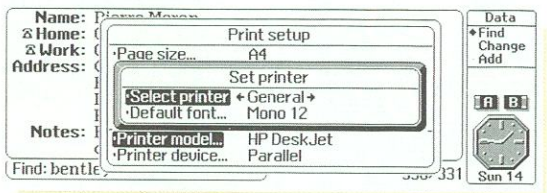
swap between the documents by pressing the Word application button. Highlight the required text in the source document (Shift + cursor keys), swap to the second (or target) document, position the cursor and choose Edit, Bring text (*Psion B*). Note that you don't have to delete the text in the source document – just highlight it and then you can Bring it to the target.

Between applications

You also use Bring when you want to transfer data between applications, but the way in which this works depends on the two applications in question.

To copy text from a word processed document into another application, highlight it with the Shift and cursor keys as usual. Then go to the target file, place the cursor at the point where you want to insert the text, and select Bring.

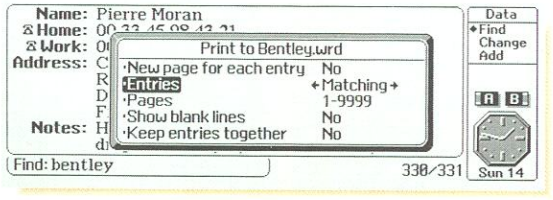
Clearly there will be some restrictions to how much data can be moved between different applications, and the form in which it will arrive. These inevitable restrictions exist simply because the layout of the data in the different applications will vary.



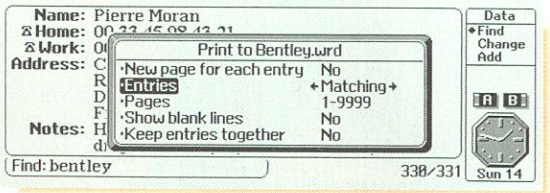
Moving multiple addresses from Data is easy. Set up Find as normal (I'm looking for people interested in Bentleys). Go to Menu, Print setup, cursor to the Printer model and select General

Whole agenda items can be copied using Bring, but not parts thereof. Place the cursor into the entry to be copied, move to the receiving application, and select Bring. The natty symbols for priorities and alarms only travel if you are copying within the agenda application. If you're copying between applications, only the text of an entry travels across.

From the spreadsheet you can highlight and Bring as much of the sheet as you wish, from the whole file down to a single cell. If you transfer data from multiple columns to the word processor, it is presented on arrival as continuous text with a tab separating data from each column. If you're transferring to the agenda, you are restricted to Bringing just a single row of data at a time. This arrives with spaces between the contents of each column. Likewise with the database, you can only Bring a single entry over at one time.



Next, in the same Print setup area, select Printer device (again using tab), set the printer device to file, and set the printer file name to something appropriate (Bentley.wrd in this case)



Then choose Menu, Print to print the file of addresses you have created, pausing only to alter the Entries option to Matching rather than All. You've now finished with the Data application

You may be wondering how the Psion knows which file to bring the data from if each file has its own clipboard and each clipboard is probably holding data. The answer is simple: it simply Brings the data from the clipboard that you have most recently filled.

So to move that address into your letter, swap to the database, find the address you want in the usual way, select it (using Shift and cursor keys), swap to the letter, move the cursor to the correct place and choose *Psion B*. Easy when you know how.

Bigger moves

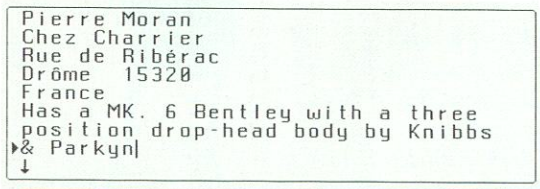
There may be occasions when you want to transfer a larger block of data and using Bring is impractical. In these instances, an alternative method is recommended. This involves printing the data to a text file which can then be incorporated into an existing file, after being edited if necessary. For example, it allows you to transfer a complete set of records from the database, or a whole agenda, into the word processor.

To transfer using this method, move to the source application, choose Print setup from the Special menu, and change the entry for Printer model to General using the tab key. Now change the Printer device to File; where it says 'File: Name', you should enter a name for the output file and an extension pertaining to the application into which you wish the data to be transferred. The common extensions are .WRD for the word processor, .SPR for the spreadsheet, .DBF for the database and .AGN for the agenda. If you don't specify an extension, it will default to that of the current application. If you want the file saved to a certain subdirectory, type that in too; the default destination is the root directory which may not always be convenient. Finally, choose the disk on which you want the file to be saved.

Now return to the source application and save the block of data in the normal way; it will be saved just as you originally specified. Next, use the word processor to inspect and edit the file, and then save it in the format appropriate to the destination application using the Menu, Save As option. You then perform the final incorporation into the target application using the Merge In option from the Menu. And there you have your transferred data.

The calculator

You may want to move data from the calculator into another application. The many uses of Bring don't reach this outpost, but you can do it in a different way. Just store the value to be moved using the Memory option, and retrieve it into the desired application by typing the name of the calculator memory in which it was placed (eg M1). Then highlight it and choose Evaluate (*Psion E*) from the menu.



Finally swap to the word processor and open the file, whereupon the addresses should appear. You may have to look in the \DAT directory for the file, although you can place the file in the \WRD directory, using tab, while setting the printer file name

And finally

Remember, the value of your data is increased if you can move it around, both within and between applications. This must be true: I've copied that sentence from the beginning of this document, and I'm paid by the word, by the word, by the word...

Ground control

It isn't just famous special agents or the very rich who can use in-car navigation systems, as Mark Whitehorn discovers

Photograph by Green & Russell

The Americans have a set of satellites circling the Earth, and at any time at least three are visible from any point on the globe. Visible, that is, not to the human eye but to GPS (Global Positioning System) receiving units, which can be small enough to fit in your pocket. These units interpret signals from the satellites and can determine their own position to within 40 metres or so.

What's this got to do with your Psion? Well, GPS units can also feed the positional information down a serial cable – and your Psion will happily plug on to the other end of that cable. Applications have already been developed for the Series 3a which display mapping information, so it has proved relatively easy to combine the two and produce a 'moving map' display. A cross marks your position on the map; as you move, so does the cross. All you need to make this work is a 3a, mapping software, a cable, and a GPS unit.

The first application I found that does this trick is Steve Litchfield's Mapper software (he also provides the cable). All I had to do was check that my Garmin GPS unit and my 3a were using the same protocol, select the 'GPS moving map' option from Mapper's Info menu, and it worked. Just like that. Mapper shows all of Great Britain, with a more detailed map of London.

Next came Microsoft's AutoRoute, which includes Northern Ireland. On its own, AutoRoute has no moving map facility, but Mike Rudin has produced an excellent program called AutoGPS (downloadable from the Psion area on the CIX bulletin board). This accepts signals from the GPS unit, and hooks into a copy of AutoRoute running at the same time on the Psion. The end result is AutoRoute with a moving cross which shows your position. Both systems use a zoomable map which displays all the major cities, towns and roads. Using either for navigation is much easier than carrying a compete set of maps. Not only does the cross pinpoint your location; you can also zoom from maps which show most of the UK on screen to maps covering just a few miles.

Finally, I have also discovered FindIt from a company called Positioning International; this provides information about useful or interesting places. You can buy the GPS unit and software as a package, or just the software if you already have the hardware.

From the database held within the system, you can instruct it to search for the nearest object or point of interest to your present location. The software then tells you how far away the particular point is and in which direction, using a graphical display. The information is continuously updated as you drive towards it.

Garmin's GPS units plug easily into the Series 3a, allowing you to leave your maps at home

The standard version holds over 7,000 UK cities, towns and villages, and 9,000 road junctions. It also includes petrol stations and fast food outlets. Optional databases include banks, pubs and stations.

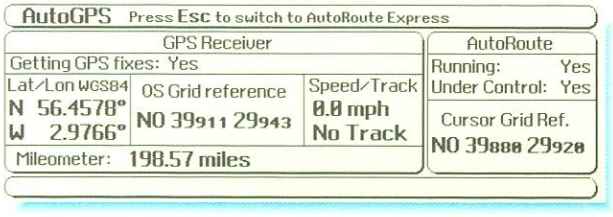
Positioning International has also designed The Cradle, an in-vehicle mounting device which provides power and an optional serial interface for the Series 3a.

Restrictions

Don't expect the positional cross to track every bend in the road on a moving map system. For a start, the US GPS system is purposely 'wobbled' to ensure that only the armed forces can get fixed to within 15 metres or so. With the wobble, accuracy is about 25-40m. There is strong lobbying to get the wobble removed, and this may happen soon. Also, the mapping software draws roads with an inevitable degree of inaccuracy. But the complete package still shows your position to within around 200m.

Finally, the Psion packages I have seen operate only in the UK or the US (Automap Road Atlas), but other foreign versions may be in the pipeline. Let us know about other software.

GPS units are available from several suppliers including Garmin Europe on +44 1794 519944. For FindIt, call Positioning International on +44 1403 276811. Mapper is available from Steve Litchfield (see shareware article). For AutoRoute, contact UK Psion dealers; and for Automap, contact US Psion dealers.



Mike Rudin's AutoGPS program displays data from the GPS unit like this

Bank to the future

Electronic banking has come a long way over the past few years, and queuing to bank a cheque at lunch time may soon be history. The Psion 3a is making its own contribution

Photography by David Whyte

Ten years ago, telephone banking was just a gleam in an aspiring financial executive's eye. Today many of us use the phone to conduct our financial affairs, and by the end of the century there should be around ten million users of this service, says market research company Datamonitor.

But this additional use for your telephone isn't the only reason why almost 3,000 branches of high-street banks in the UK have closed in the last five years. Other, newer innovations are making it easier for account holders to transfer money, check account details and pay bills remotely, without having to brave the lunch-hour rush to their local branch. PC banking, kiosk banking and even TV banking are all in various stages of development as the major banks try to cater for the different and changing needs of their customers.

'People are increasingly busy, and often don't have the time to stand in a queue at their bank during lunch,' says Gillian Neale, vice president of Global Consumer Banking at Citibank. 'Today's lifestyles are driving the demand for alternative methods of communication with banks.'

John Leather, product manager for emerging technology at Britain's Lloyds Bank, agrees with this view. 'We're satisfying the changing needs of different groups of people,' he explains, 'but technology won't replace traditional methods of banking *en masse*. It's about broadening the availability of service, rather than replacing one service with another.'

One group of people ideally placed to benefit from the boom in electronic banking is Psion owners. Both Lloyds Bank and Citibank have already launched banking software for the Psion Series 3a for UK customers. All you need to use these packages is your Series 3a, a modem and a phone.

Citibank's Psion service, like its general service, is aimed at frequent international travellers. The software was especially designed to imitate Citibank's own screen architecture so that customers who are familiar with the bank's screen vocabulary and layout are immediately eased into the application.

Once account holders have inserted the SSD and connected to the bank via modem, they can view up-to-date account details, access general banking details such as interest rates and overdraft limits, make transfers between accounts, order cheque books, and change their Telephone Personal Identification Number (T-PIN). After paying an initial charge for the SSD, there is no subscription fee, and no transaction or call charges (unless you are calling from abroad or from a mobile phone).

Says Neale: 'The Psion provides huge functionality in addition to the banking application and it isn't frightening. Users who are wary of PCs often feel at home using something like the Psion.' Initial feedback from the service has been positive, according to Neale, and Citibank plans to issue a new release later this year which includes a bill payment facility. Foreign language versions are under consideration.

The Lloyds Bank package, provisionally named Electronic Cheque Book, is still in the pilot stage and should be formally launched later this year after initial customer feedback has been taken into account. Lloyds Bank decided to design the software so that it would be familiar to Psion users. The package

PAY
Sort Code 407623
00437712
SONJ342278
CAMBRIDGE
General
WATER
£
JF WILSON MO2
Signed
1/5
309156-00026378
Sun 9
Esc
Tab
ON
OFF

If you don't use Lloyds Bank or Citibank – don't despair, you won't necessarily be stuck in the Dark Ages

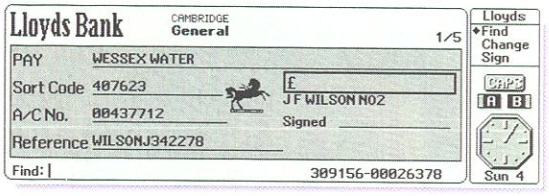
allows you to view statements of recent transactions, access general financial information, obtain balances and forecast balances on up to four accounts, transfer money between accounts and pay bills and salaries electronically.

Electronic cheques are paid from one of up to 16 electronic chequebooks, which can be marked as express – for payments to other Lloyds Bank accounts. Cheques written from express chequebooks are credited on the same working day.

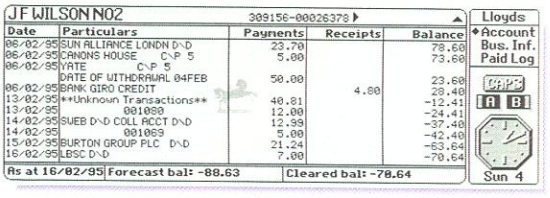
Leather is enthusiastic about the role that the Psion plays in the project. 'Many people use this sort of device to manage their day-to-day lives, and banking is a natural extension of that. We're moving towards providing different solutions for different groups, rather than trying to offer everyone the same product. Everyone has different needs.'

Both the Lloyds Bank and Citibank services keep an 'audit trail' of your transactions, and both allow you to enter transaction details before going online so that everything is ready to send as soon as you're hooked up. By connecting your Psion to a printer, you can also print details for your records. And for those who are worried about the security implications, both packages have several levels of security built in to prevent unauthorised transactions being made.

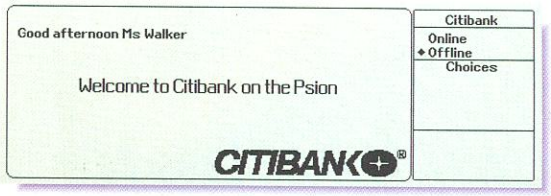
If you don't use Lloyds Bank or Citibank – don't despair, you won't necessarily be stuck in the Dark Ages. All the banks are looking at providing financial services via the Internet, and you should soon be able to conduct transactions by a combination of screen display and voice instructions. And if you want to purchase a major financial product – such as a mortgage or pension – you should be able to review all the information you need and question expert advisers without leaving home.



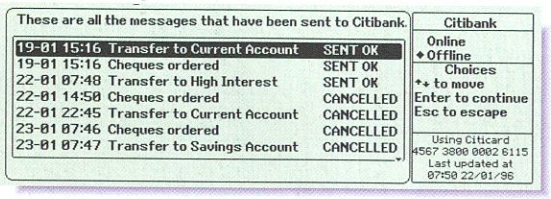
A chequebook on your Series 3a – and you don't need a pen


JF WILSON NO2
309156-00026378
Lloyds
Account
Bus. Inf.
Paid Log
CAPS
A B
Sun 4
Date | Particulars | Payments | Receipts | Balance
06/02/95 SUN ALLIANCE LONDN D\D 23.70 78.60
06/02/95 CANONS HOUSE C\P 5 5.00 73.60
06/02/95 YATE C\P 5 DATE OF WITHDRAWAL 04FEB 50.00 23.60
06/02/95 BANK GIRO CREDIT 4.80 28.40
13/02/95 **Unknown Transactions** 001080 40.81 12.00 -12.41 -24.41
14/02/95 SUEB D\D COLL ACCT D\D 001069 12.99 5.00 -37.40 -42.40
15/02/95 BURTON GROUP PLC D\D 21.24 -63.64
16/02/95 LBSC D\D 7.00 -70.64
As at 16/02/95 Forecast bal: -88.63 Cleared bal: -70.64

You can display a mini statement of recent transactions



Foreign language versions of the Citibank package are planned


These are all the messages that have been sent to Citibank
19-01 15:16 Transfer to Current Account SENT OK
19-01 15:16 Cheques ordered SENT OK
22-01 07:48 Transfer to High Interest SENT OK
22-01 14:50 Cheques ordered CANCELLED
22-01 22:45 Transfer to Current Account CANCELLED
23-01 07:46 Cheques ordered CANCELLED
23-01 07:47 Transfer to Savings Account CANCELLED
Citibank
Online
Offline
Choices
↔ to move
Enter to continue
Esc to escape
Using Citicard
4567 3800 0002 6115
Last updated at
07:50 22/01/96

The Citibank software imitates the bank's screen architecture

In the UK, Barclays is leading the way. Last year, the bank launched Barclays on the Microsoft Network (MSN) for Windows 95 users who have access to the MSN. And it also boasts the UK's first virtual shopping mall offering a secure method of purchasing goods and services over the Internet. Retailers that have taken space at 'Barclay Square' include Argos, Blackwell, Eurostar and Sainsbury.

For those who aren't connected to the Internet but who do own a PC, Bank of Scotland has offered its home PC banking service for over a decade. Other banks haven't been as quick off the mark, and most offer PC banking only to businesses at the moment. However, before the end of the year, we should see considerable activity on this front.

NatWest Bank has gone one step further than this and launched the world's first television banking scheme last year, in a pilot scheme involving 250 households in Cambridge, England.

If you do want to pop in to the bank while you're shopping, many banks have started to introduce staffless automated branches, open 24 hours a day. NatWest, Co-operative and Lloyds Bank have all installed these kiosk-type banks nationwide in the UK, allowing customers to access product information using touch-screen technology. And in Switzerland, Zurich-based Co-op Bank uses kiosks to offer extended opening hours and off-branch locations, and to connect customers to advisers in a central customer service centre.

Banking has definitely come a very long way over the last five years, and experts worldwide agree that we're on the edge of a major electronic banking boom. It'll be a while before we're all meeting the bank manager via videoconference, and several years at least before we can check our balances using the television remote control during commercial breaks. But for those of you who own a Series 3a, the electronic banking revolution may just be closer than you think....

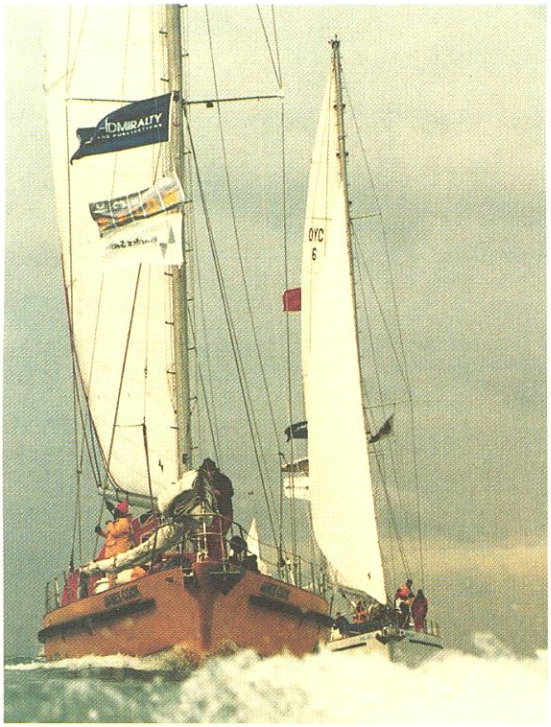
A global affair

People all over the world have benefited from a helping handheld from Psion

Sailing ahead

Just before Christmas, 300 young people from a range of backgrounds throughout the UK sailed off on the first leg of a 15-month world voyage. By the time you read this, the crew of the two 72-foot ketches will be somewhere between Tahiti and Sydney, using Psion Series 3a's running navigation software to find their way.

The voyage was organised by the Ocean Youth Club, Europe's largest sail training charity.



Mexico rally

In the 1995 London to Mexico rally, the team from Britain's Metropolitan Police used a Series 3a and 3Fax to keep an accurate track of time and to fax messages back to its UK base. The team covered 12,000 miles in four weeks, and won the 'Spirit of the Event' award.

Education online

Dyslexic children in the Leicestershire area in the UK can now access online information services and transfer information easily between their homes and the Leicestershire Dyslexia Institute, thanks to a 3Fax donated by Psion.

Aid for Africa

ActionAid's work in Mozambique's Zambezia Province was given a boost by a donation of £30,000 from Psion. This will help to train teachers and craftsmen, and to improve the quality of life in one of the poorest parts of the world.

Amazon adventure

As part of his PhD, Mark Harris travelled to the floodplains of the Brazilian Amazon with a Series 3 to record details of the natives' history and livelihood.

Helping to rebuild

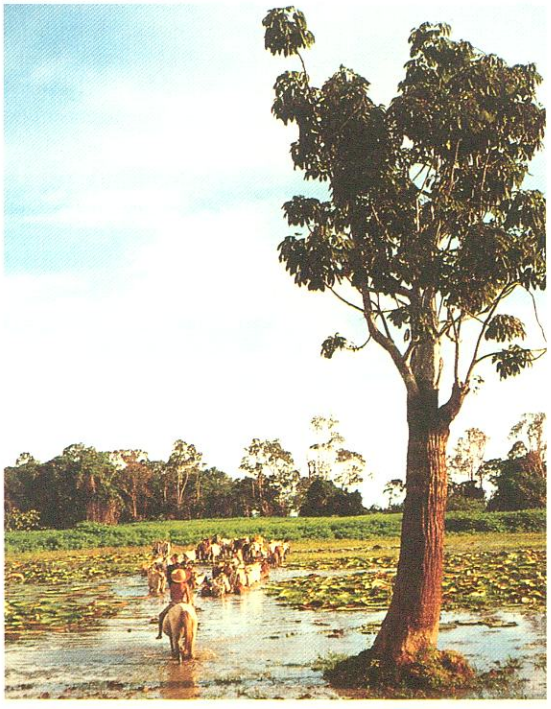
Aid workers in Bosnia are using Series 3a's to establish reliable communications for educational institutions throughout Sarajevo and Bosnia Herzegovina. Technical personnel prefer the 3a's to laptops, which are vulnerable to theft at gunpoint or confiscation at checkpoints.

A winning combination

The winning team in the 1995 Cape to Cape Challenge not only drove more than 3,500 miles in under 64 hours – they did it in a Ford Transit van, without breaking any national speed limits.

The team, which raised over £8,000 for charity, took a 1MB Psion Series 3a on the gruelling journey to help them keep up to date with correspondence from sponsors. Team members also used the 3a for basic mapping and for storing a database of contacts.

Around 25 teams participated in the race, which passes through seven countries from the northernmost point in Europe (Cape Nordkapp in Norway) to the southernmost (Cape Tarifa in Spain).



A world first

Psion recently sponsored the world's first Fibonacci tournament, in which Oxford University lost to Cambridge University. The winners of the game – a cross between chess, backgammon and Go! – each received a Series 3a.

Speedy recovery

The medical records of drivers taking part in the 1996 British Touring Car Championship are stored in a Series 3a, giving the medical services team quick and easy access to the information on the move. The Psion also holds details of nearby intensive care and trauma units.

Taking stock of shareware

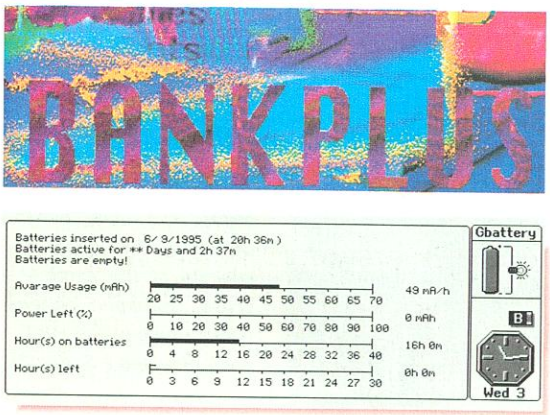
There are hundreds of programs for the Series 3/3a available from the Internet, from bulletin boards and by post. Some are shareware, others are freeware – Roger Gann explains the difference and how to get hold of the goodies

Illustration by Osnat Lippa

Now that the major software companies have such a firm hold on their markets, it's not easy for small developers to get in on the act. The shareware concept emerged to overcome this problem.

Instead of being sold through dealers, shareware is typically uploaded by its author on to bulletin board systems and other dial-up services. Prospective customers can then download the software for free and try it out. If you like it, you're obliged to pay for it; if you don't, you simply erase it. And some programs – known as freeware or public-domain software – are absolutely and unconditionally free of charge.

Shareware isn't the sole preserve of the PC and Macintosh world. The Psion scene is particularly busy, with as many as 100 new titles being added to the shareware lists each month. Just about every conceivable type of program can be found: you only have to look at the Top 20 list opposite to get some idea of the wide spectrum available.



From banking software to batteries: the Gbattery utility gives you the lowdown on your battery's life expectancy

So where do you start? How the about the excellent Gbattery, which gives you complete battery status information; or JAM, which gives you a month view in Agenda? Then there's the indispensable off-line reader for CompuServe, ReadCIS, plus its Web add-on scripts, WebCIS. How about several versions of Tetris, or backgammon? Or maybe you want to liven up your alarms with a James Brown *I Feel Good* sound file... With Psion shareware, you really are spoiled for choice.

The best way to tap into this gold mine of Psion software is to download it from a dial-up service via a modem - this method is both cheap and quick. There are several excellent online sources of Psion software: various Internet sites, CompuServe (see the Psion area of the 'Palmtop A' forum), and the UK's CIX.

The main Internet Psion archive can be reached at:
http://src.doc.ic.ac.uk/packages/psion/icdoc/

Running a very close second is the site maintained by Psion guru, Steve Litchfield. His excellent 3-Lib Web site has an extensive library of shareware. It's at:
http://ourworld.compuserve.com/homepages/slitchfield/

Other Internet archive sites include:
ftp://ftp.frontiernet.net/pub/psion
http://www.comlab.ox.ac.uk/oucl/users/robin.watts/
http://www.apocalypse.org/pub/psion

Perhaps the best source is CompuServe, because it's so easy to access using the Psion and a modem. You'll find offers to subscribe to CompuServe in many personal computer and Internet magazines. As well as more than 1,000 Psion shareware files, there are files for programmers and online books that you can download and read on your Psion – *Dracula* is one.

The sheer quantity of files makes it difficult to browse online, so the Psion area has a catalogue file (LIB18.ZIP) which you can download and read offline at your leisure. This compressed file expands to almost 150KB, so you're better off reading it on a PC rather than a 3a. Once you've decided what to download, you simply log back on to CompuServe, select the files individually and download them in one go.

Most Psion shareware programs are small and take seconds to download; the 3Fax will download these files straight to your Psion with no trouble. However, most users will probably download files to a PC first and then use PsiWin to transfer them. If you do download files direct to your 3a, remember that you'll need plenty of free memory to store them – with shareware it's tempting to grab everything in sight...

You'll also need a program to decompress shareware that's been compressed. It's easy to tell which files need decompressing (or 'unzipping'), as they typically end in .ZIP. There are plenty of PC unzip programs, and one (called S3UZIP14.ZIP) that runs on the 3a; you obviously need to expand this on a PC first.

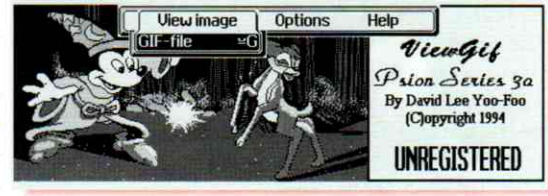
Psion shareware Top 20

CompuServe libraries list the number of times a file has been downloaded, so it's easy to gauge which files are most in demand – just look for the ones that have been downloaded the most frequently. Here is a recent list.

RANK	PROGRAM
1	DataApp (gives a table view)
2	ReadCIS (offline reader for CompuServe)
3	Free file manager
4	Conversion calculator
5	Backgammon
6	ProPoc (project manager)
7	UnZip instructions
8	Battery check
9	Series 3a emulator for the PC
10	Web surfing guide
11	Finger 11 typing assistant
12	WebCIS (Internet add-on for ReadCIS)
13	MusiPoc (graphical music editor)
14	FastSort (for DBF files)
15	File Searcher
16	PicPoc (paint program)
17	BankPlus (personal accounts program)
18	Notepad and to-do list
19	Ftris (Tetris-like game)
20	Macro (keyboard macro system for the S3a)

If you're not online, don't despair; shareware gems can be found on floppy disk – remember that you'll need a PC and PsiWin to get the programs to your 3a.

There are several disk-based sources. First is Steve Litchfield's 3-Lib Psion shareware library. A free catalogue is available by sending an A4/A5 stamped self-addressed envelope with an extra loose first-class stamp to: Steve Litchfield, 22 Grays Crescent, Woodley, Reading RG5 3EN, UK. If you are outside the UK, please include a self-addressed envelope and an 'IRC' – an international reply coupon.



Cartoon time: this shareware program takes GIF computer images and displays them on your Psion

Meanwhile, the UK magazine *What Personal Computer* regularly includes Psion shareware on its free cover-mount CD-ROM. It also sells two 3.5 inch floppies full of Psion goodies. Contact the magazine at: Greater London House, Hampstead Road, London NW1 7QZ, UK. There are also Psion user groups in several countries (including the UK, France and Germany), which offer shareware via their Web sites or bulletin boards. As you can see, there's no shortage of sources, and there's something for everyone – it's just a question of finding it. So get browsing...

Switching on the Net

The Internet is easily accessed from your 3a – with a little help from the likes of CompuServe. Roger Gann explains how to get online

Illustration by Osnat Lippa

OK, so it's easy enough to access the Internet with a PC or Macintosh, but what about using the 3a? Surely it lacks the capacity and processing power to 'surf' the Net, you may ask. Well, that's just not true – you *can* access the Internet using your favourite palmtop and below I'll look at just how to do this. But first things first....

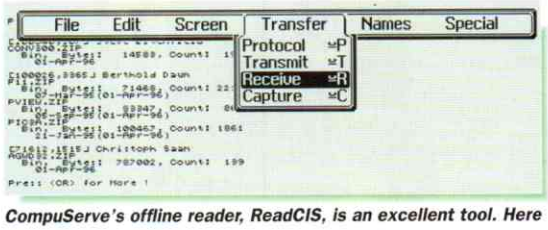
What is the Internet?

The Internet is a global network of hundreds of smaller networks, typically set up by governments, universities and commercial companies. These are 'inter-networked' – hence the term 'Internet' – using high-speed telephone and digital data lines to form a much larger single network.

Unlike company networks, the Internet has an informal structure and is completely unregulated. As a result, nobody can say with any certainty how many people have access to the Net. The best guess is around thirty million, but this figure is growing rapidly – perhaps as much as 10% each month.

What does it do?

The Internet was originally used just for electronic mail and file transfer. It then expanded to include newsgroups – unmoderated discussion forums on an enormous array of topics (more than 14,000 at the last count). The Internet only experienced explosive growth, however, in the 1990s with the advent of the World Wide Web (WWW). This is a medium for publishing pages of attractively formatted information, and for linking these pages to other relevant pages.



CompuServe's offline reader, ReadCIS, is an excellent tool. Here I've logged into the library area of the Psion Palmtop forum

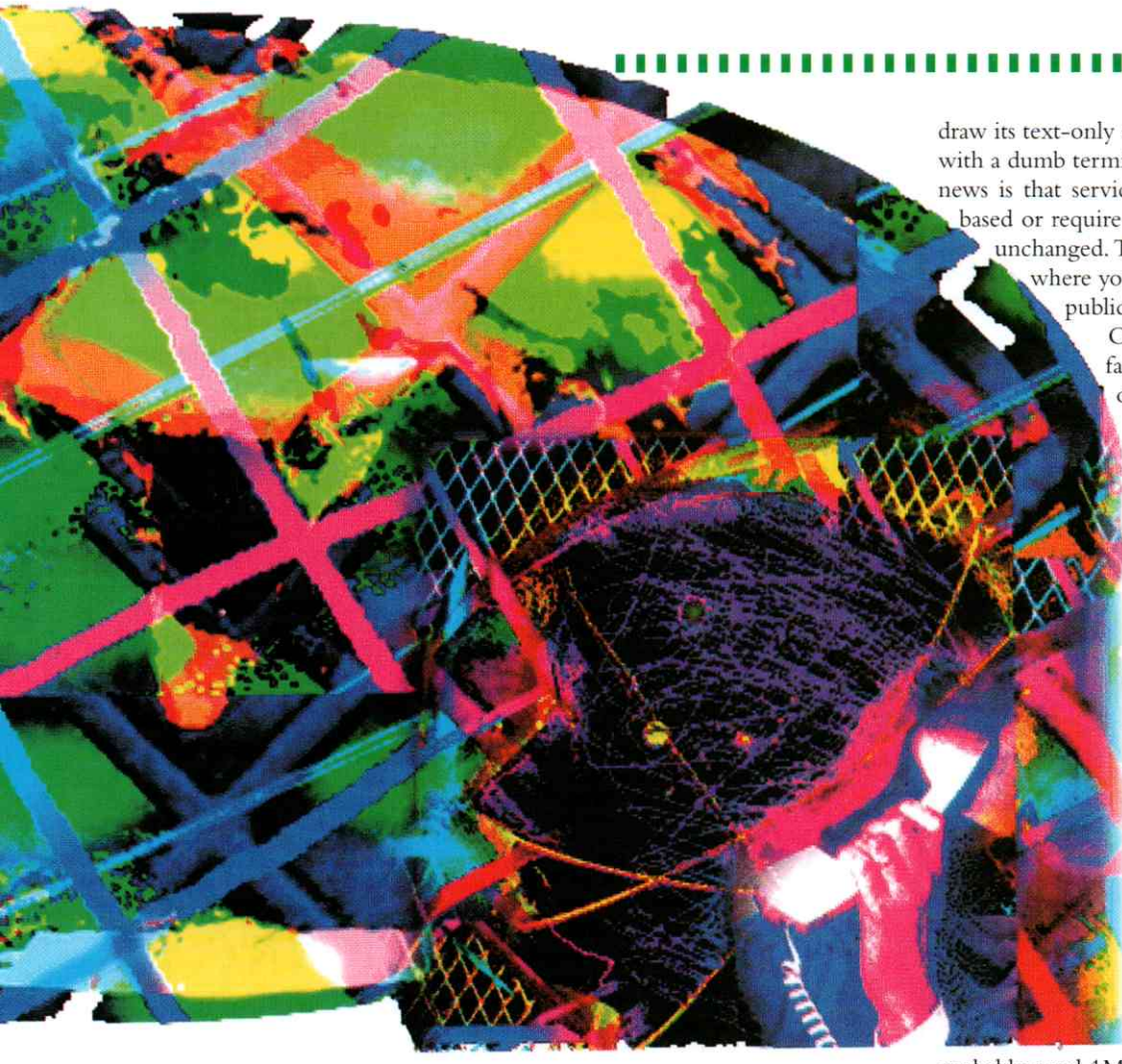
With limitations, the 3a can access all these Internet facilities. There are no graphical Web browsers available for the 3a, but you can surf the Web using an online, text-based browser; there are no pretty pictures, but response times are faster.

Getting connected

To understand what you can and can't do on the Internet with your trusty 3a, you first need to know how other personal computers connect with it.

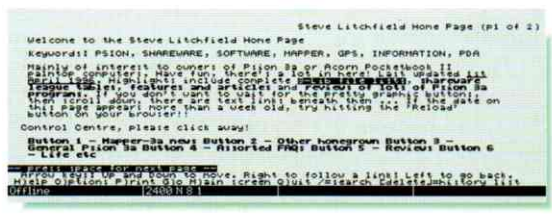
Like a local area network, the Internet uses a 'protocol' to manage the transmission and reception of data. A Novell network uses IPX; a Windows network uses NetBEUI; and the Internet uses TCP/IP (Transmission Control Protocol/Internet Protocol).

This is all very well for personal computers, which have vast hardware resources, but on a 512KB Series 3a there just isn't enough memory, storage or processing power for any networking software.



So how do you get around the lack of TCP/IP? The secret is to use an intermediate dial-up service that has Internet links but doesn't require TCP/IP and instead allows connections to be made from simple (or 'dumb ASCII') terminals, such as VT100 or TTY. The basic facilities needed to allow TTY connections are already built into the 3a. And if you need VT100 comms, there are several commercial and shareware programs that support this, such as the excellent Terminal shareware program, written by Psion's German subsidiary.

So which dial-up services allow you to connect to the Net? Perhaps the best known and most widely available is CompuServe. This service is usually available via a local telephone call, and so provides low cost Internet access. Other dial-up services include CIX in the UK. But whichever service you choose, you'll have to pay a monthly fee.


Steve Litchfield Home Page (P1 of 2)
Welcome to the Steve Litchfield Home Page
Keyword:! PSION, SHAREWARE, SOFTWARE, MAPPER, GPS, INFORMATION, PDA
Control Centre, please click away!

Here I'm using a text-based Web browser, Lynx, to visit Steve Litchfield's 3-Lib site – a goldmine of shareware for Psion users

Most personal computer users access CompuServe using graphical comms software: either WinCIM for Windows or MacCIM for the Macintosh. Indeed, so many people now use these graphical interfaces that CompuServe plans to withdraw its text-only service (the sort that you can access with a dumb terminal). That's the bad news. The good news is that services which are predominantly text-based or require simple terminal access will remain unchanged. These include the Palmtop forums, where you'll find all the Psion shareware and public-domain goodies.

CompuServe's Internet file transfer facility, FTP, does require WinCIM or MacCIM, so you can't perform FTP from within CompuServe on your Series 3a. However, Telnet (which lets you log in to other computers as a remote user) and Usenet access work fine, as does CompuServe's Mail facility, which allows you to email any Internet address in the world.

What you need

As well as a subscription to a dial-up service and a phone socket, you'll need three other essentials.

Memory. Some of the software you'll need requires as much as 170KB of RAM (and sometimes more) to run. So if you've got a 256KB or 512KB 3a, you'll probably need to top it up with a RAM SSD. A 512KB disk should do the trick, though if you're serious about surfing the Net, you'll probably need 1MB. You'll need the extra capacity to handle file transfers and the many messages you'll download from newsgroups.

Modem. You can use any modem with the 3a. Use either the standard Psion serial cable plus a 'null modem' adaptor, or Psion's own 3Fax modem.

Comms software. It's perfectly possible to use the basic comms program that comes with the 3Fax, but you can make life much easier by using other software. The best utility for connecting to CompuServe is David Keppler's ReadCIS v1.6. This 'off-line reader' seeks to minimise phone and connect bills by connecting, automatically uploading your outgoing messages, downloading any you've received and then logging off. You can download a copy for trial use from the Psion forum in the CompuServe Palmtop area.

So far so good – we're online. But what about accessing the Net from within CompuServe? You can do this manually by entering 'go telnet' (or 'go usenet' for newsgroups) at the CompuServe prompt. But you can also automate the process by downloading certain ReadCIS script files. Collectively known as WebCIS, these shareware files have only to run from within ReadCIS to connect to a Psion-friendly Web site (telnet.w3.org), or to the Psion shareware heaven at London's Imperial College FTP site.

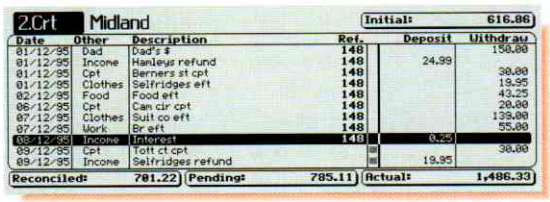
And if you don't know where the cool Psion sites are, download PSIONWWW.DBF, a Data-format database listing 31 sites and their Internet addresses.

Soft options

Whether you want a sophisticated business finance package or a game for those few spare moments, the Series 3a gives you a wide choice. We look at four of the best recent releases

Psion: Money

Balancing act

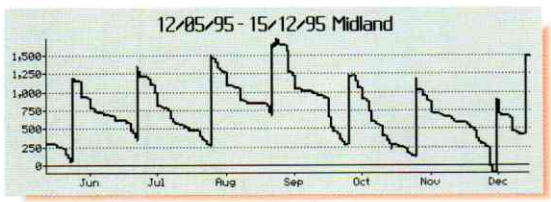


2.Crt Midland — Initial: 616.86

Date	Other	Description	Ref.	Deposit	Withdrau
01/12/95	Dad	Dad's $	148		150.00
01/12/95	Income	Hanleys refund	148	24.99	
01/12/95	Cpt	Berners st cpt	148		30.00
01/12/95	Clothes	Selfridges eft	148		19.95
02/12/95	Food	Food eft	148		43.25
06/12/95	Cpt	Cam cir cpt	148		20.00
07/12/95	Clothes	Suit co eft	148		139.00
07/12/95	Work	Br eft	148		55.00
08/12/95	Income	Interest	149	0.25	
09/12/95	Cpt	Tott ct cpt			30.00
09/12/95	Income	Selfridges refund		19.95	

Reconciled: 781.22 | Pending: 785.11 | Actual: 1,486.33

Running your current account using Money...



...and plotting the comings and goings

Do you wrestle with bank statements and VAT? Or do you run a small business where you need to monitor your trading position, wherever you are? The beauty of Psion Money is that it can handle anything from basic personal finance up to double-entry bookkeeping for business use. And you don't need to be an accountant to use it.

Money allows you to create accounts (up to 256) for everything you own – or owe – such as bank accounts, assets and credit card advances. Then you set up categories for income and expenses, such as salary, pension, rent and bills.

Money calculates your total balance by totalling your earnings and subtracting your outgoings; it can also provide balances for each category.

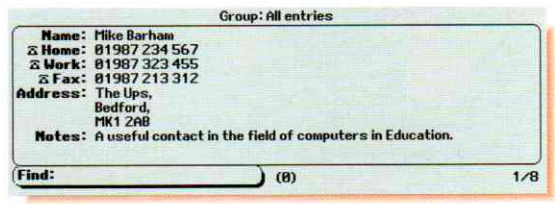
You enter transactions for three types of 'event': moving money from an account to a category (say paying a bill); from a category to an account (eg, receiving interest); or between accounts (in which case your net worth stays the same). These transactions are kept in 'books' – rather like bank statements – and you can mark them as 'pending', so you can reconcile, say, your bank balance with your cash balance at a later date.

There's much more to Money, such as reports, VAT and budgeting. But if I can get to grips quickly with the package, then anyone can.

Marc Beishon

Money for the 3a is available in English, German, French and Dutch. Contact your local Psion dealer for details. Banker is a similar package available in the US.

DataView Pro gives a 'list' view of your data...



...and like Data you can have a form view as well

Purple Software: DataView Pro

As you *like* it

So you've found that one of the 3a's great strengths lies in its database, Data. Now, perhaps, you want to view the data in a different way. Enter DataView Pro.

Data displays information in a form view (like flicking through a card index), with one record visible at a time. A major advantage of DataView Pro is that you can swap between form view and a list view; this shows a screenful of records, each occupying a single row. Within list view, you can alter the column width, and the order in which columns appear.

In Data, all fields (the discrete labelled areas where data is stored – eg, 'Name') are text fields. In DataView Pro, they can be set as text, numeric, real numbers, date, time, currency or 'last word'. This allows you to store whole names (eg, Fred Smith) in one field, and then sort by last names.

The benefit of using different field types is that you can sort records more easily. DataView Pro can sort using up to three different fields.

The 'Groups' facility allows you to define up to eight groups, and to enter records into any or all of these groups.

Entries can be merged into word-processed files. And there is a standard Avery label size library and label editing facility.

DataView Pro is an excellent package which builds on the success of Psion's own Data. It will import any Data files.

Mark Whitehorn

DataView Pro for the Series 3a/Workabout is available in English, French and German. Contact Purple Software: +44 171 387 7777.

TELEGRAPH COLOUR LIBRARY, TONY STONE

Purple Software: Backgammon & Chinese Chess

You *win* some

There's something a bit lucky about the game of backgammon – or so I thought until this version for the Psion beat me five times in a row. The more games you play, the more obvious your lack of skill becomes, as the dice scores begin to even out.

The program has some good features to get the best from the game. The excellent display shows a full board, and to allow the pieces to be a decent size, only five can be stacked in one place. Any more that land on top are then indicated by a number. (Stacking beyond five can be turned off for a harder game.)

There are options for animating the dice and pieces, and the program allows doubling and resignation. It can also be set to play in aggressive or defensive mode.

After a couple of tries, you soon learn how to speed through games – but gambling on quick play (remembered from some long-ago Greek beach holiday) doesn't cut much ice with a Series 3a. I now owe mine £16.

The other half of this package is Chinese Chess. It's played on a bigger board than normal chess and has strange pieces called counsellors, cannons and ministers, as well as kings, rooks, knights and pawns. Oh, and the Yellow River runs across the board, and each player has an Imperial Palace.

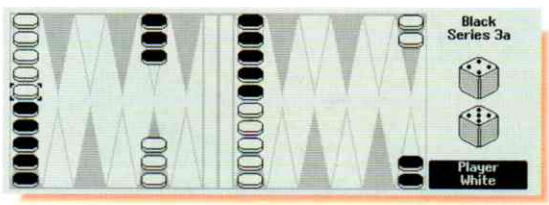
Clearly, this isn't a game to approach in a hurry, especially as the engine for the game was written by a champion Chinese chess programmer. But although the board has nine vertical and ten horizontal lines, the number of pieces is the same as in conventional chess, so it's not as complex as it seems.

A 'piece information' option explains the function of each piece, you can receive hints on what to play, and there are five skill levels.

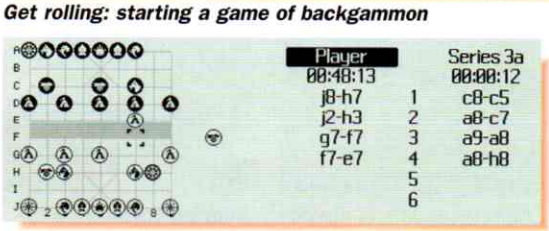
Chinese Chess poses a refreshing challenge to those who have tired of conventional chess.

Marc Beishon

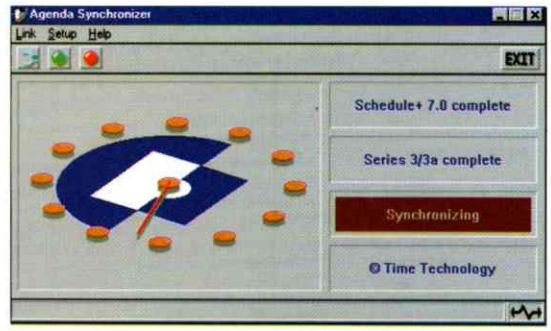
This package for the 3a is available in English only. Contact Purple Software on +44 171 387 7777.



Get rolling: starting a game of backgammon



Over the wall: Chinese chess in progress



Diaries at the ready: this screen shot from the PC side shows Agenda Synchronizer in action

Time Technology: Agenda Synchronizer

Double *vision*

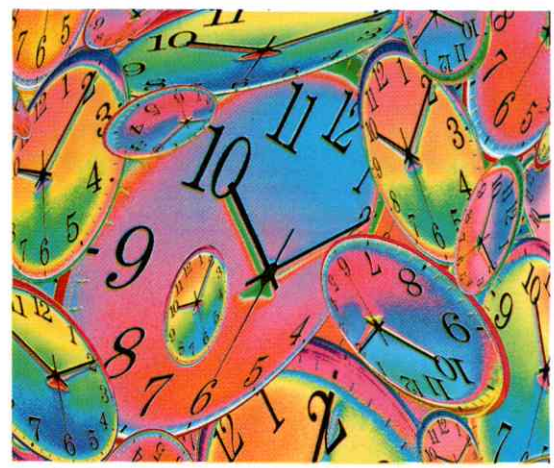
Many of us threw away our Filofax when we bought our Series 3a, and haven't looked back since. But we're increasingly using PC-based appointment schedulers in the office.

The inevitable problem is that it's tricky to keep the two sets of appointments synchronised. At best, you have to re-key appointments; at worst, you may miss an important meeting.

Agenda Synchronizer is designed to avoid this nightmare scenario. This PC program works with Schedule+, the time manager in Windows for Workgroups 3.11 and Windows 95, as well as Lotus Organiser 2.1. Once installed, you link your Psion to the PC via the 3Link cable and set the remote link to 'on'.

Agenda Synchronizer then takes initial snapshots of the Psion's Agenda files and the PC's scheduler files. When you next connect, it compares both current schedules with the previous versions. It then identifies the changes and writes this updated information back to both data files.

The synchronisation is automatic, and can run in the background. When it encounters the inevitable clash, both appointments are entered in both data files, and a list of the clashes is displayed.



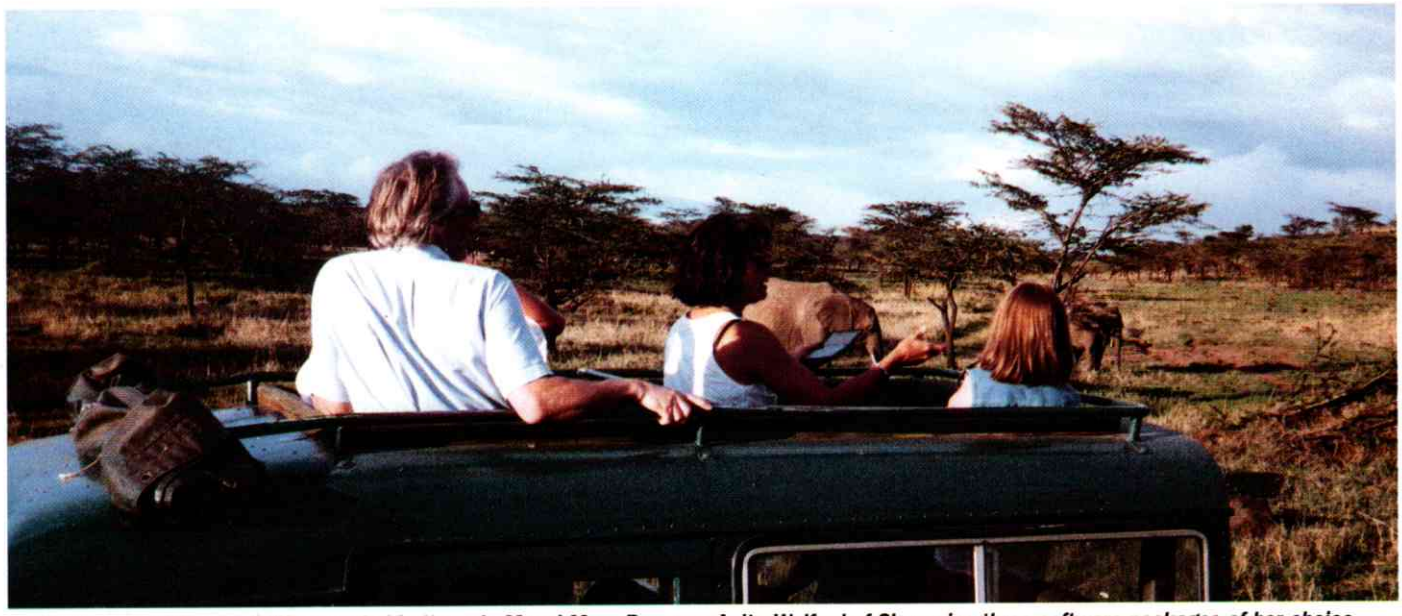
Since the two schedulers aren't identical, some Agenda entries (eg, to-do lists) won't be mirrored at the PC end. Nevertheless, Agenda Synchronizer provides a neat solution to a thorny problem, and is a 'must have' utility.

Roger Gann

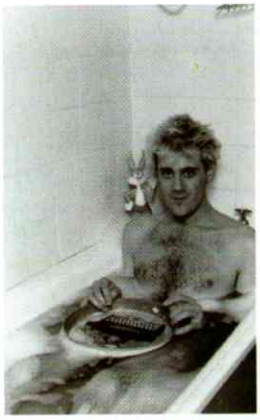
Agenda Synchronizer for the Series 3/3a is available in English and Dutch. Contact your local Psion dealer for details.

Two other synchroniser products are also available: Widget Software's Agenda Link and Yellow Computing's Time Link.

In the last issue of *Psion User*, we asked for photos of your Psion in amusing or interesting situations, or in unusual places. Thanks for the many excellent entries – here's a selection

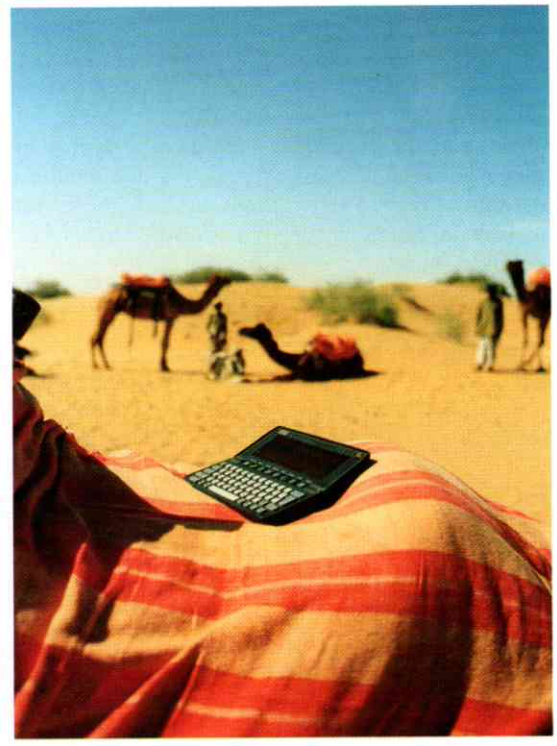


Recording sightings of wildlife on safari in Kenya's Masai Mara Reserve: Anita Walford of Skye wins three software packages of her choice



Phil Rose prefers his 3a to a rubber duck

Postal chess: Jim Avery's game has lasted over a year



Back pack: in the Rajasthan desert (Michael Crockitt)

Paul Rose's pupils logging soil measurements

Jack of all trades: Roy Foley's new roadside assistant

Picnic time: John Brooke's bear using AutoRoute

Light work: Mrs H. Gordon works while in traction

Budding dealer: Peter Hettich's son in action

BUSINESS USER

UNITED KINGDOM

Oasis tailors solution

Oasis operates a successful chain of retail fashion outlets in the UK, with more than 80 stores and a number of 'in-store' concessions. In common with many retailers, Oasis's shop floor stock represents a significant percentage of the company's assets at any given time. So it is essential that staff have a quick and accurate method of counting and recording stock.

'Our existing system was dreadful,' explains Richard French, systems manager for the chain. 'It was entirely manual, with staff recording information on paper; this was then keyed into a central computer.'

Oasis wanted a system that was flexible enough to transfer data into existing channels, and was easy to use. 'We needed something that was user-friendly because the bulk of the work is done by branch staff,' says French. 'They gather the data, and this is then collated and verified by auditors.'

A perfect fit: the new stock control suits Oasis nicely

Oasis chose Paradigm Technology, a specialist in handheld computing, barcoding and data communications, to develop a solution based on the Psion HC handheld computer. The new system was implemented in two phases.

In the first phase, staff read a numeric code from a label and manually tapped this into the Psion. Then, after Oasis introduced barcoding last summer, the manual element was completely eliminated with staff scanning the barcode directly into the HCs.

Staff can verify data they have entered, so preventing inadvertent duplication. And the software also handles the direct transfer of the collected data to a portable PC database in a specified format for analysis and reporting.

'The new system is a real improvement,' says French, 'with the main benefits being speed and accuracy. Now that the entire system is paperless, there is no need for costly and error-prone re-keying.

'We have around 40 HCs in operation at the moment, and this number is increasing in line with our growth.'

SOUTH AFRICA

Life is sweet for Langeberg

When food maker Langeberg South Africa launched canned KOO Sugar Beans, it was sure that the product would be a success. Sugar beans are part of the staple diet of South African consumers and until then were only available as a dry product which had to be soaked overnight.

Langeberg SA selected Frontline Promotions to distribute and promote the product to the emerging mass market. The Frontline service includes the use of marketing distribution monitors, who are equipped with a Psion HC110, a barcode scanner and software developed by Psionet, Psion's South African distributor.

Some of the units also incorporate a modem for transmitting data from remote sites.

Michelle Gass, marketing manager at Langeberg, says that the great advantage of the distribution monitors is accuracy.

'The system has a built-in pricing mechanism which makes it impossible to read products until the store code, date and time have been scanned into the barcode reader,' she explains.

'And because the system is automated, the human error factor is eliminated.'

The system allows the company to track what is in each store, what price it is selling at, and how it is moving.

Gass has no doubt the system was a crucial part of the marketing process. 'We definitely couldn't have taken this market by storm without the Frontline service,' she says. 'Advertising and distribution must go hand-in-hand.'

Psion Workabout

The Workabout has a large backlit LCD, and separate alpha and numeric keypads. Designed for outdoor applications, the Workabout is weatherproof and rugged, and supports a wide range of peripherals. The integral memory is either 256KB or 1MB, and there is provision for a further 16MB via two SSD drives. File formats are DOS-compatible for easy data transfer.

Psion HC

The HC is a robust, modular range of multitasking computers, supporting a wide range of peripherals. Memory options are 128KB, 256KB and 512KB; and file formats are DOS-compatible. Weatherproof versions are available, and units with a built-in radio modem allow remote data transfer.

Organiser II

Designed for entry-level commercial applications, the Organiser II is ten years old this year. The machine offers a choice of keyboards, screens and a memory of either 256KB or 512KB.

Pharmacist's friend

Fifteen clinical pharmacists at Salford's Hope Hospital in the UK are using Psion 3a's loaded with bespoke software to record their daily activities. At the end of each month, the activity records are downloaded into Microsoft's Access database and analysed.

'The program is effectively a management tool which has allowed the pharmacists to monitor their own performance and to respond better to the needs of customers throughout the hospital,' explains Christine Clark, chief pharmaceutical officer. 'We are now in the process of developing further applications for our Psions in the fields of performance monitoring and clinical audit.'

Telling breeds apart

Swiss cattle are the latest converts to the Psion Workabout. The creatures have become very familiar with the machines since the Swiss Cattle Breeders Assocation started to use them for cattle classification earlier this year.

All cattle in Switzerland must be registered with an assocation – there is a different association for each breed – and employees travel from farm to farm gathering data about the animals. Statistics such as the weight, breed and measurements of each animal determine how it is classified.

Instead of using paper-based forms to record the data, staff now enter it directly into the Workabout and download it each evening to a central database. At the same time, details of the next day's schedule are downloaded to the Psion.

BELGIUM

Insurance agents give the Series 3a Royale approval

Royale Belge – the second largest insurer in Belgium – has provided more than 500 of its agents with a Series 3a running a customised pricing program. The new system will make it easier to calculate car insurance quotes on the move, in an increasingly competitive market.

Jacques Brasseur, project manager at Royale Belge, says the 3a has enjoyed an enthusiastic reception. 'Our network of agents fell in love with the 3a. They can now calculate quotes quickly and easily, and can also use the machine as a personal organiser.'

The system was supplied by Belgian IT company Micro-Azur, which has provided solutions for this market sector for over a decade. 'We have always thought portable computers unsuitable for this type of application,' says founder and managing director, Yvet Aubert. 'They are cumbersome and need expensive batteries which always run out at a crucial point.'

For many years, Aubert searched in vain for a small but powerful handheld, battery-operated machine, which could replace everything that insurance agents need to carry: a diary, general terms and conditions of contracts, a database of addresses, client files and the full pricing structure. 'The breakthrough came on a fine summer's day in 1994, when I discovered the Series 3a,' recalls Aubert. 'I was immediately convinced it was the ideal pocket computer for insurance agents.'

Aubert abandoned his Filofax and asked a developer to come up with a pricing system designed to run on the 3a. 'The result was a program which incorporates everything the agent needs, combined with a user-friendly interface.'

Since its launch last year, several other Belgian brokers besides Royal Belge have adopted customised versions of the program, and interest continues to grow.

This popularity is explained partly by the profound changes experienced in the Belgian insurance market. Free-market pricing was recently introduced, and insurers have discovered the joys of 'customer segmentation'. These changes have made additional demands on brokers and have encouraged insurers to seek increased market share by improving and extending the range of products on offer.

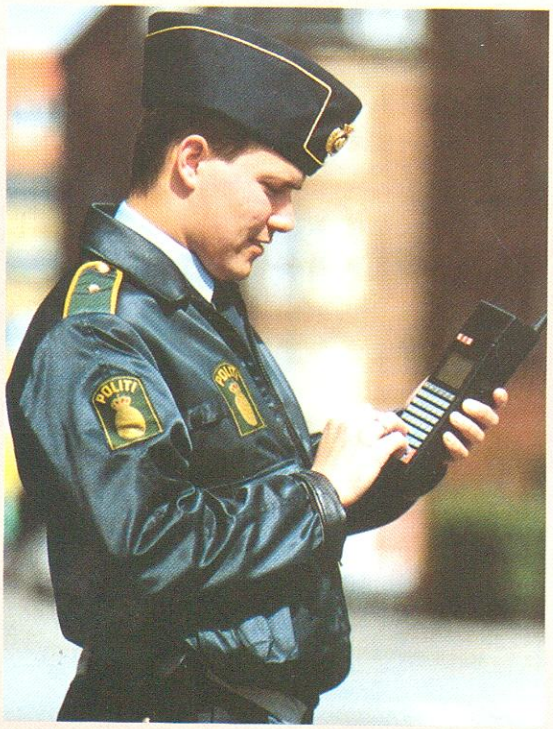
DENMARK

Danish Police go Workabout

The Danish State Police will shortly take delivery of 600 Workabout-based terminals. Running specially developed software, the units will allow police on the move nationwide to access information which is crucial to their day-to-day operations.

Installed in the car, and using the vehicle's power supply, each Workabout will be connected to a Motorola radio modem in the boot.

'The Danish Police have successfully used portable, HC-based terminals outside their cars since 1993,' says Lars Lynggaard of Mobi Data, Psion's Danish distributor. 'Most commonly, they are used to find out whether a bicycle or car is stolen, to check passports, and to check whether a suspect has a criminal record.'



Danish policemen have been using HC-based units since 1993

However, the police needed in-car terminals for use alongside the portable units. Conventional car-mount terminals were tested, but proved to be unsuitable for installation in police cars because their size and mounting caused safety problems.

The Workabout was chosen ahead of several competitors after a seven-month trial. 'With the HC outside the car, and the Workabout inside, a Danish policeman on the move will never be far from his Psion,' says Lynggaard.

UNITED STATES

Surveying the market

Pentax has chosen Psion to provide the hardware for its new SC-200 series of survey computers. Aimed at professional surveyors, the computers combine Psion's handheld HC with Pentax's specialist software.

'The Psion handhelds offer the best combination of power and modularity,' says Kerry Kemper, product marketing manager in Pentax's Survey Instruments division. 'We couldn't find that level of versatility in any other product on the market.'

The ability to replace batteries, ports and memory cards in the field is crucial to surveyors, says Kemper. And file compatibility is very important because the SC-200 machines are handheld versions of the computers Pentax sells for office use.

'Data collection is a crucial and integral part of the total station,' says Kemper, 'so we wanted to provide a competitive solution in this area.'

Later this year, Pentax is planning to introduce another handheld survey computer running the same software as the basic machine in the SC-200 series, but based on the Workabout. This will target the lower end of the market, and will suit surveyors who don't need the power that the HC offers. Says Kemper: 'Some firms like to have a lot of versatility and power in the field; others prefer to go back to the office and do the computations. It's a matter of working philosophy.'

The outdoor examinations test physical stamina and skills such as driving and shooting

SWITZERLAND

Swiss army life saver

The Swiss Army has enlisted Psion to help its officers monitor the outdoor training of fresh recruits.

In a pilot project, one of 40 army training colleges is using Workabouts and Series 3a's to record the results of outdoor examinations that test physical stamina, and skills such as driving and shooting. The officers evaluate the data back in the office, using a PC.

Dr Nicolas Gonin, who is monitoring the project for the Swiss Army, says that the Series 3a and Workabout offer different advantages. 'The Workabout is sturdy and excels in outdoor conditions,' he explains, 'while the 3a's Agenda feature is very useful. Time and people management are crucial in what we do.

'Previously, the officers used a paper-based system,' Gonin continues, 'but this controlling system is far more effective. The fact that officers can download test results electronically after a day's work means that they have all the data they need to plan the next day's schedule. With the paper-based system, data wasn't available quickly enough to allow this.'

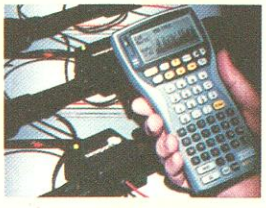
If the pilot is successful, the Army is set to place an order for more than 1,600 units.

UNITED KINGDOM

Boost for battery users

The Workabout is being used with specialist software to monitor the life of large lead-acid and NiCad batteries. These batteries are used mainly in UPS (uninterruptible power supply) systems, but you can also find them in yachts and even tanks.

Says Brian Hanking, managing director of UK firm Newport Data Systems, which developed the Cellwatch system: 'Technology has made it easier to monitor the life of small, everyday batteries. But the higher end of the market has always had difficulty finding a system to suit its needs and budget.'



Current information on a battery of tests

Cellwatch comprises small monitoring modules which are attached to each cell or battery. The modules are interlinked and are powered from the battery to which they are fitted.

The information from each module is sent to the Workabout, which graphically displays the voltage and temperature. This data can then be stored locally or transmitted via modem to another site or computer.

Fishy business

In fisheries around the world, scientists are using the Organiser II to store the measurements of captured fish. French company Ifremer has designed a fish measuring board which uses bar-codes read by a waterproof sensor pencil. The Organiser interfaces with this board and stores the data gathered by the bar-code reader. Ifremer chose the Organiser above other computers because of its pocket size, high storage capacities, removable datapacks and data transfer capabilities.

Collection of data such as the length, species, sex, and sometimes age, of the fish is required to manage fishery resources. Fully electronic fish measuring boards haven't taken off, because they provide less data, often perform poorly in a marine environment, and are not easily upgradeable.

HC is high climber

Engineers installing Ionica's new telephone service, launched in the UK this year, have their handheld HCs with them when they climb ladders to set up the residential receiver units. The new service is based on the Proximity I Fixed Radio Access system, which was developed jointly by Ionica and Northern Telecom. The HC is included in the package to help install and configure the residential units.

'The HC is used to hold configuration data, such as antenna alignments,' says Keith Fey, project manager at Nortel. 'We could have used laptop computers, but they are just too bulky to climb ladders with.'

Meter reading

Around 2,000 employees at one third of Poland's 33 regional electricity boards now use the HC to take meter readings. The data is then downloaded to central computers for billing and analysis.

'Psion's involvement with the boards dates to 1990,' explains Jarek Gazy of Psion's Polish distributor, CIE. 'Several regional boards investigated the business systems needed to improve the efficiency and quality of service provided to their millions of customers. They pinpointed meter reading as the most important area.'

As a result of the study, six boards adopted the Organiser II for meter reading and invoice issuing. The HC has now superseded this as the main choice for most boards, but some new customers are choosing the Workabout to perform the same function.

Fuel for thought

Each day, the delivery drivers employed by French fuel company Trottier set out with a Workabout containing data about the day's deliveries. As they visit customers, they record the quantity of fuel delivered and the payment terms agreed. And if customers suddenly decide that they want more or less fuel, the drivers can modify the initial order directly using the Workabout. Back at the depot, drivers download the data into a central billing system.

The solution cuts paperwork and overheads. It also allows Trottier to respond quickly to incoming orders and to assess the work of their drivers.

NEW ZEALAND

Filling records is child's play

Therapists at a busy child oral health service in New Zealand are reaping the benefits of a new system centred around Psion's Series 3.

The Child Oral Health Service attached to the Hutt Valley Health Crown Health Enterprise employs 42 dental therapists who are responsible for the treatment of 41,000 children in the Greater Wellington area.

Barbara Patience, field tester and trainer for Hutt Valley Health

Until 1993, records were largely paper-based, but the manual information gathering and recording was, says clinical director Peter Dennison, very time-consuming. He estimates that each therapist spent one day a month just doing paperwork. Added to this, therapists had to constantly watch the clock, and define and categorise activities for the records.

When the health service underwent major restructuring and the practice entered a more competitive environment, the need for change became acute. But the practice couldn't afford costly mistakes. Therapists had already been involved in an unsuccessful field trial of an optical mark reading system. 'It cost $35,000 in staff time and produced nothing,' says Dennison. 'All the data had to be redone manually.'

In mid-1993, each therapist was equipped with a Series 3 running a customised software program. Understandably, staff were cynical this time around, but they were quickly won over to the new system.

The program does two things: it tracks time usage (staff must log on and off each activity and log on and off at the beginning and end of each day), and captures patient information. The machine also records details of staff travel and supply requests. Each month, therapists post the SSD from their machine to a central office, where the data is downloaded into a PC database; exchange disks are mailed back.

Therapists are closely involved in the development process. Dennison says: 'Continual improvements are suggested by the field staff, the resource manager, the co-ordinators and myself. It's continually being refined.' This may help to explain the success of the system, which recouped its costs in just 18 months and allows ongoing salary savings. 'It had to work well from the start,' says Dennison, 'and it has.'

UNITED KINGDOM

HC excels for Exel Logistics

When you're part of the UK's leading international logistics and moving services company, you have to ensure that your service never falls short of excellent. But it's no mean feat to check that the correct orders are delivered at the right time when your company delivers thousands of containers of car parts daily from various distribution centres.

When Exel Logistics, part of NFC, faced this challenge, it decided to enlist the help of Psion. 'We must have seen every portable handheld company in the UK,' says Andy Illingworth of NFC's research and development division, 'but we settled on the HC because of its durability, price and programming capabilities.'

The HC alerts drivers to any orders that are incomplete

Now, drivers scan the containers to be delivered before leaving the Exel distribution centres and the HC alerts them to any incomplete orders. On reaching the customer premises, drivers scan the car dealership barcode to mark the time of arrival and to alert them of the order requirements.

As drivers unload the vehicle, they again scan each container being delivered. Should they scan the wrong one, the HC emits a warning bleep. At the end of the working day, drivers upload the scanned information using a modem to a central database at head office.

'The Psion helps us to avoid making errors with our stock control, and ensures that we provide a better service,' continues Illingworth. 'But greater accuracy isn't the only advantage – it's also about eliminating much of the form-filling and paperwork that used to clog up the system.'

Exel Logistics is currently using 250 Psion HCs with integral scanner, as well as 20 modems, and it is considering the possibility of extending the scheme to its European and worldwide operations.

NETHERLANDS

Platform for Workabout

Carrying out a thorough station audit means working through a long checklist of points. Is there rubbish or graffiti on the platforms? Do the escalators and vending machines work? Are there buskers performing where they are forbidden? And is the roof leaking? All these questions and more need to be answered.

To make this task as easy as possible for its employees, the Dutch National Railway is using 40 Workabouts to record the results of these questions. Dutch software house Palmtop has developed an intelligent questionnaire system for the railway which guides its employees through hundreds of possible questions according to a route based on the answers supplied.

When the employees return home after their shift, they simply download the data collected to a central database, via modem. Their schedule for the next shift is then downloaded to the Workabout in return.

Says Tim Schelling of Psion Netherlands BV: 'The users are very pleased with the new system, because they previously had to battle with bulky paper forms, often in the wind and rain. Also, they had to work through mountains of paperwork at home after the shift. The Workabouts are very user friendly in comparison.'

Now the Dutch National Railway is implementing a similar system to measure quality of service on its trains.

Tony Minton has written a program for his 3a which calculates the unit cost of his bottled water

UNITED KINGDOM

Minton's liquid asset

Tony Minton never used a computer at school, and admits that he is largely computer illiterate. But since buying his 2MB Series 3a one year ago, he has written his own software, and now uses the Psion every day in his business life.

Minton is managing director of several businesses, including Minton Spring Water. The company's headquarters are in London, but the water is sourced and bottled in Torpeek, on the edge of Dartmoor.

'I bought my Psion after I saw a friend's, and taught myself how to use it,' he explains.

Minton keeps a database of suppliers' contact details, and uses this to record information gathered from phone calls, such as details of price changes or special offers. He monitors his finances using the spreadsheet, and plans his movements with the agenda.

'I use the Psion for so much,' says Minton, 'but the most invaluable feature to me is the program I wrote to calculate the cost of a bottle of water.

'The price of labels, caps, trays, shrinkwrap and transport fluctuates daily, and before I had the 3a I calculated the new unit cost per bottle manually, with a calculator and bits of paper. It took ages.' Now, Minton just enters the price change, and the program automatically calculates the new cost per bottle. It will then multiply the unit cost by 12 or 24 to give the cost per crate.

'It was complicated without the program,' says Minton, 'because we buy in labels, caps and so on by the thousand, but sell bottles of water by the dozen. With the 3a, I can quickly and easily get the total cost per crate. In this competitive business, 10p difference on the price of a crate can make all the difference.'

Lifting standards

Kone, the world's second largest elevator company, is equipping all 225 of its Dutch service engineers with an HC with integral printer and modem, running tailored software.

'Competition in this sector is fierce,' says Jerry van der Ziel, the project manager at Kone. 'We needed to provide the best customer service and a more user-friendly system for our engineers.'

Now, job details can be downloaded to field engineers, and dispatchers can monitor their movements. Engineers can connect the HC to elevator management systems to read fault reports. They can also order spare parts, access email, and print a service sheet for each customer on the spot. Details of completed jobs are logged in the HC and imported into a central database at Kone. 'The administrative procedure is reduced dramatically,' says Tim Schelling at Psion BV.

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Radio active workers

An increasing number of workers are taking to the airwaves and making use of wireless networks for data communications. Bob Walder explains what the options are

Photography by Nina Davis

According to the latest research, a very high proportion of the workforce in many countries now operates outside the office – up to 40 per cent in the UK, for example. Usually they are key personnel – such as sales executives and field service engineers – and being out of touch with their corporate computer systems can cause major problems. What if the office needs to get in touch urgently? How do they find out where their next client visit is? How do they calculate accurate quotes or estimates without carrying a mountain of paper-based information? How many forms have to be completed, cross-checked and then handed in?

The mobile phone has done much to free travelling executives from the shackles of the office. But although cellular technology has revolutionised voice communications, data communications are still a problem. Central computer-based systems are often used to log fault calls or sales enquiries, but the final link – getting the information to personnel in the field – must invariably be done by phone, with all the attendant problems.

Add to this the fact that an increasing amount of inter- and intra-company communication is carried out by electronic mail today, and it is apparent that extending the office computer network out to the mobile worker – whether at home or in his vehicle – is crucial to ensure effective customer service. (See also our Cover Story on PsiMail.)

Market analysts predict dramatic growth in the use of wireless networks for data communications. Estimates vary as to how many of us will use portable computers or terminals with mobile data. However, for cellular and radio communications, the UK user base provides a good guide: the number of users should top 250,000 this year and could exceed one million within five years.

When you add another half a million users of simple messaging, the total figure is equivalent to 25 per cent of the expected UK population of business mobile phone users at the end of the century (Source: *Mobile Data*, Network Subscription Service Ltd., March 1996).

All the key elements of this technology are already in place and have become more attractive and easier to work with. Psion's Series 3a and rugged handheld terminals cost from just a few hundred pounds, and software is available to send and receive information securely and reliably using such hardware. Overall system costs have fallen significantly and, once the initial investment has been made, the cost of transmitting messages and data electronically is marginal compared to using voice and paper.

However, for those organisations new to mobile data, the apparent proliferation of services brings confusion – and possible frustration if no single solution meets all the business requirements. To make things clearer, the five categories of public mobile or fixed data network are summarised below. Note that 'messaging' refers to sending notes that can be read instantly on-screen; 'data' transmission refers to sending items such as sales orders directly to a central computer.

Public access mobile radio (PAMR)

National PAMR services are available that provide mixed voice and data capability, and a very limited (23 character) messaging facility. PAMR offers a relatively slow data transfer rate, but a fast call set-up time and fixed monthly costs. It is a more attractive alternative to private mobile radio (PMR) – used widely by utilities, emergency services and taxi companies – which is expensive to implement and offers limited coverage.

Packet switched radio

Packet switched radio is aimed at short message applications in areas such as field service and distribution. The data transfer rate is relatively slow, but there is effectively no call set-up time, as you are permanently connected to the network. This makes the services excellent for the frequent exchange of short bursts of data, such as status messages, delivery information and database queries.

Fixed managed data networks

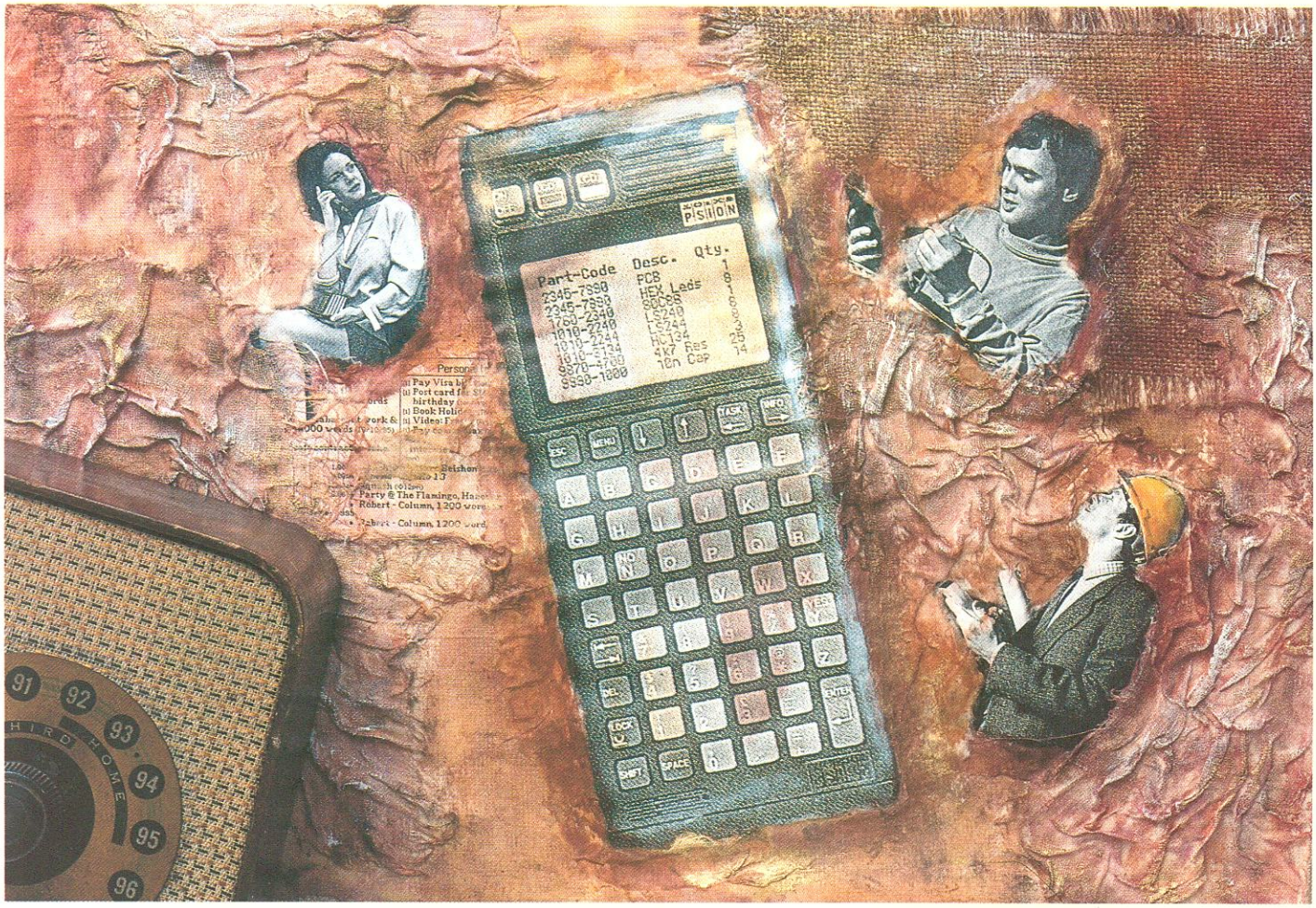
Where workers operate from various fixed locations, and aren't continually travelling, managed data services from the major public telephone operators can offer significant savings over standard dial-up connections, particularly for European or worldwide use.

Analogue cellular (TACS)

Analogue mobile phone services do allow data transfer via modem, but transfer speed is slow.

Digital cellular (GSM/PCN)

Digital mobile phone services also allow data transfer. Suitable phones can be linked via handheld or laptop computers to provide file transfer, remote local area network access, and fax facility, with increasing international coverage. These services are usually reliable, and are characterised by fast data transfer rates but slow call set-up times. This makes them most suited to the fairly infrequent exchange of small to medium volumes of data. Also available is the short message service (SMS), suitable for exchanging status/address information. SMS is fully supported on the Series 3a and Workabout.



Potential users of mobile data should assess their needs carefully before proceeding. This involves considering the number of users, current investment in mobile communications, mixture of voice and data required, most common source and destination of calls, patterns of usage and so on.

Armed with this information, you can approach the different service providers and system integrators to find the most appropriate and cost-effective solution for your business needs.

Many businesses, for example, use 'hybrid' messaging and data transmission to spread information more quickly, gain competitive advantage and reduce overheads. And these companies often achieve immediate operational savings.

The initial investment can often be justified by just one additional service call or appointment per week, and can be paid for by one less trip to the office, an extra few per cent on the sales figures, or reduced administration and overheads.

The use of mobile data will soon become daily practice for mobile executives, sales staff, service engineers and other key employees working in the field.

Psion's mobile solutions

Psion has developed MSIS (Mobile Support and Information System) specifically to address the problems faced by mobile field-based personnel.

The basic system comprises a fixed host PC-based application to allow logging of customer calls; this can be linked to a client database if required. The program displays which field staff are available, together with their current job status – whether they are on-site or travelling, how many jobs are in their backlog, and so on.

The new job can then be allocated to the most appropriate person, and the system ensures that the message is delivered to the handheld computer used by that employee.

On the handheld is user-friendly software which allows staff to sign on, receive job details, review and amend those details, send status messages on the progress of a job, and finally to close a job. The ability to send and receive general messages is also incorporated, and the communications channel can be either packet switched radio, private mobile radio (PMR), PSTN or a combination.

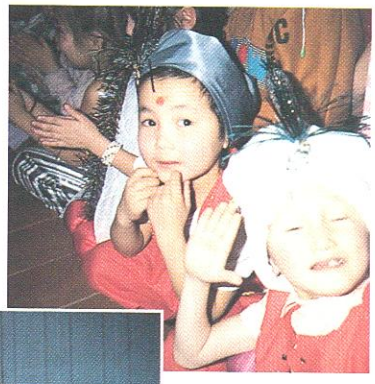
London Electricity, the electricity utility for the UK's capital, turned to Psion when it needed a more efficient way to communicate job details to any one of its 250 engineers following the announcement of two-hour, time-banded appointments. In conjunction with Psion, the company has introduced a mobile data solution to its job control problems. Jobs are now dispatched electronically over a PMR network to Psion HC110 units mounted in the vehicles of mobile personnel.

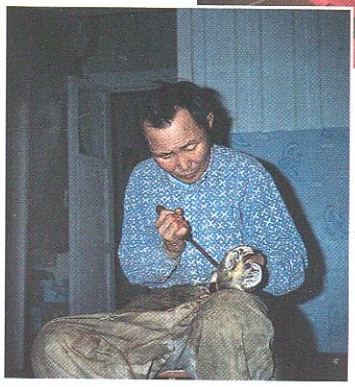
Field personnel now have a high success rate in keeping to the timed appointments, thanks to the increased efficiency of the mobile data-communications system. The company has also realised significant cost savings by implementing data-over-radio systems. Says Mike Dixon, telecommunications project manager at London Electricity: 'The projects we have implemented with Psion have been so successful that we have noticed a consistent fall in voice traffic over our PMR network, balanced by a significant increase in data traffic. Data over radio is definitely the way forward for London Electricity.'

dear diary

Sandra-Lynne Jones used a Psion to record daily events in a remote Siberian settlement. Extreme cold, reindeer meat, and freak lightning were just some of the things she experienced

Photography by Sandra-Lynne Jones





Wrapped up warm: Sandra-Lynne (below) has fond memories of the friends she made in this remote region

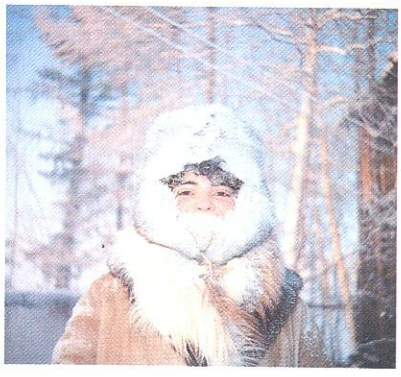
Most people would go to the local library if they wanted to find out about life in a far-flung part of the world. But when Sandra-Lynne Jones wanted to learn more about the local beliefs, traditions and languages of the Yakut-Sakha Republic, she decided to go and live there for one year. Equipped with a knowledge of Russian and two Series 3s donated by Psion (two in case one of them froze), Sandra-Lynne left for a teaching placement deep in the Siberian forest.

'I was staying in a settlement of reindeer herding and elk/bear hunting people, which was surrounded on all sides by forest,' she explains. 'The region is inaccessible except by helicopter or small plane. During winter months flying is almost impossible because of the weather conditions, and the makeshift local roads are virtually blocked. Many villagers never leave the settlement, except to go hunting or herding deeper in the forest.'

The Aldan Region she visited has long been closed to foreigners and other Russians, and is one of the most sparsely populated places in the world. It's also one of the coldest, with temperatures plummeting as low as -60°C. 'It was too cold to wear man-made textiles,' recalls Sandra-Lynne, 'so everyone wore reindeer-skin clothes and boots which the women would sit around together sewing. I had to keep the Psion against my skin, under seven layers of fleece and fur, to prevent it from freezing.'

Home was a wooden hut with a wood stove and no running water. 'We got up around 5.30am every day to chop wood and clear snow. Collecting water was also a chore because it involved breaking the river ice and carrying the freezing water back to the huts in a home-made yoke. Baths in a tin tub were limited to one a week to economise on water.'

The early start meant that most villagers went to sleep at 8.30pm. But Sandra-Lynne would sit and write for several hours on her Psion, recording the day's impressions. 'At first the people I stayed with were suspicious of the Psion, and thought I must be a spy,' she says. 'There was only one typewriter in the settlement, owned by the school, and a pocket-sized keyboard like this seemed like something from outer space to them.'



Without the Psion, Sandra-Lynne would never have been able to detail her life there with such fascinating thoroughness. 'I don't know what I would have done without it,' she says. 'There was a severe paper shortage in the area, and nothing on sale but very dilute green ink. And I wouldn't have been able to carry enough paper with me because of the strict luggage restriction.'

During one evening writing session, Sandra-Lynne was startled by a freak electrical surge caused by lightning. 'The flash SSD was completely burnt out,' she says. 'When I later showed it to Psion technical support, they said they'd never seen anything like it.'

Unfortunately, illness forced Sandra-Lynne to cut her visit short after four months in the settlement, and she spent several months convalescing. 'My illness was caused partly by the diet, which consists almost solely of reindeer meat. Also, the water was polluted by effluent from local gold mines. There was nuclear testing going on around the region, and the cockroach powder we used was radioactive.' If that wasn't enough, there were epidemics of TB, diphtheria and meningitis in the settlement. Unsurprisingly, the average life expectancy there is only 45 years.

Sandra-Lynne is now fully recovered and is planning more trips with her Psion.

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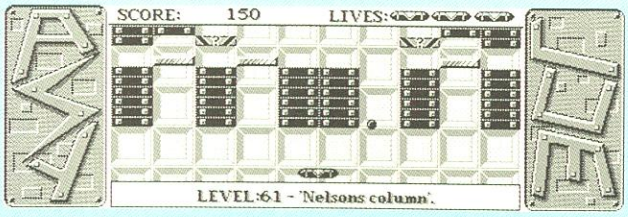
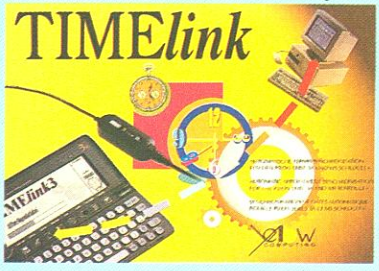


TIMElink



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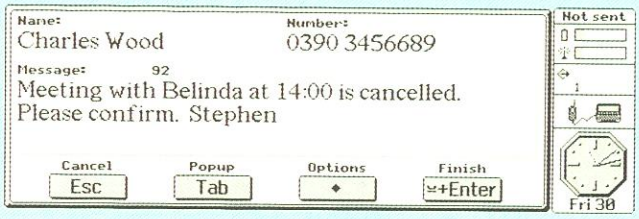
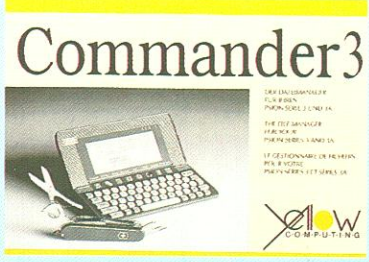
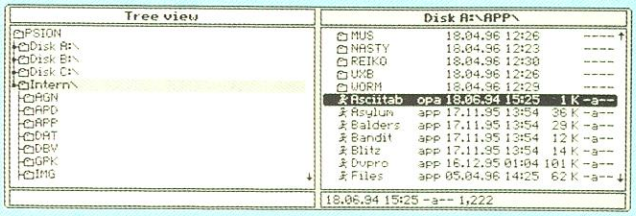


Commander3



This easy-to-use file manager is quite similar to the well-known Norton Commander with the following functionality: Copy, Move, Rename, Deletion of Files or Subdirectories, Tree- or Listview, Immediate Launch of Applications, Hexeditor, Viewer for Database, Text and Graphics, SSD-Utility, Packer, UUCODE. Multilingual software in English, German and French.



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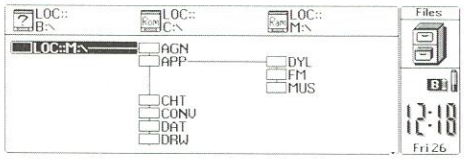
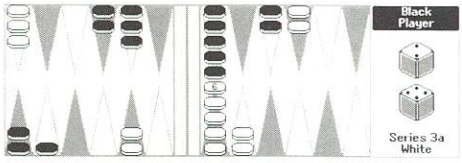
TOOLKIT 1

Not one, but four applications on a single floppy diskette or SSD, giving you a powerful file manager; a comprehensive converter that handles currencies, all types of measurements and clothes sizes; a picture viewer that can display, convert and print PIC, PCX, BMP and GIF file formats; and a facility for printing any Psion screen display on popular printers.



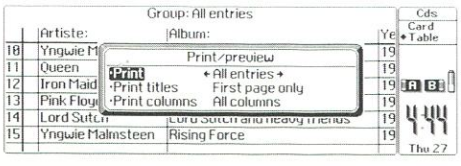
BACKGAMMON & CHINESE CHESS

Two fascinating strategy games in a single package. Both programs incorporate powerful games engines ported from the PC world, providing incomparable performance on a pocket computer. Play against the computer, a human opponent or watch the computer play against itself. Superb graphics and a choice of playing modes will maintain your interest for hours!



DATAVIEW PRO

Fully compatible with the built-in database, this Series 3a program adds powerful new features such as a convenient list view, single and multi-level sorting, powerful new search facilities, flexible column displays, mail merging and advanced printing of cards, lists and labels. An optional add-on enables you to wirelessly exchange short messages with users of selected mobile phones.



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